



# **DYNAMICS OF POPULAR NATIONALISM IN CHINA'S JAPAN POLICY IN POST-COLD WAR ERA**

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## ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this thesis is to seek answers to the two core research questions: how has popular nationalism been instrumental in China's Japan policy *vis-à-vis* its domestic politics since the end of the Cold War? And, how and to what extent has the Chinese government managed popular nationalism in foreign and domestic policy practices?

Using Japan as an empirical subject, this thesis explores and investigates the complex interactive relations between popular nationalism, in particular emotions and sentiment, and foreign policy and domestic politics in post-Cold War China. The work takes a constructivist view, which popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics are seen as mutually constituted. Taking two recent diplomatic frictions between China and Japan as case studies, the thesis critically examines the mutually constitutive effects of popular nationalism on China's Japan policy in respect to its domestic politics. In addition, the work's pioneering studies on the new 'inward outcry' syndrome in Chinese nationalism further highlights the mutual constitutive relations among popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics.

This thesis argues that the popular nationalism plays a dynamic role in shaping China's Japan policy. On the one hand, popular nationalism may **instrumentalise** to serve China's domestic and international objectives. On the other hand, popular nationalism has to be delicately **managed** in order to maintain social stability, amicable relations with Japan, and increasingly, China's international image and reputation.

*To Mum and Dad:*  
*Guardians, Friends and My Eternal Love*

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## Abbreviations\*

ACDDI	Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (Hong Kong)
AFP	Agence France-Presse
APEC	Asia-Pacific Development Cooperation Forum
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBS	Internet Bulletin Board System
BPF	Belarusian Popular Front
CADDI	Chinese Association for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (Taiwan)
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CFDDI	China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands
CNN	Cable News Network
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Centre
CNR	China Network Radio

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\* Governmental departments and agencies listed here are all Chinese, unless stated otherwise.

COC	Chinese Olympic Committee
ECS	East China Sea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FAO	Foreign Affairs Office of the Central Committee
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FPDM	Foreign Policy Decision-Making
G4	Group of Four Nations (Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil)
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IR	International Relations
JCG	Japanese Coast Guard
JMSDF	Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force
JSHTR	Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform
KMT	Kuomintang
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MND	Ministry of National Defence
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce
MSS	Ministry of State Security

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance (Japan)
PEC	Patriotic Education Campaign (1990s)
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RFI	Radio France Internationale
ROC	Republic of China
SCIO	State Council Information Office
SGD	Small Group Dynamics
TMD	Theatre Missile Defence
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
VOA	Voice of America
WWII	World War Two

## Notes on Chinese and Japanese Names

Adherent to common practice in China and Japan, Chinese and Japanese names are presented with surname first throughout this work. Pinyin is used as the primary Romanisation systems for the Chinese names and places; however, original spelling in quotations and references stands unchanged. The Wade-Giles system of Romanisation is used for some names, places and organisations long familiar in the West. Examples include Jiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi in Pinyin), Nanking (Nanjing), and Kuomintang (Guomindang). Original Chinese characters are provided at first instance along with English translations for Chinese concepts, ideologies and phrases; and for book, newspaper and magazine titles in references.

# Introduction

The relationship between China and Japan has always been a fascinating and complex subject in general and International Relations (IR) in particular. It is fascinating perhaps because, as two close neighbours separated only by a narrow strip of water (一衣帶水的邻邦), China and Japan have enjoyed a close relationship dating back centuries to ancient civilisations. And yet, despite their sharing culture and philosophical teachings, the contemporary relations between these two Asian neighbours could not be more antagonistic, with two prolonged and bloody wars fought in the past hundred years or so. It is complex perhaps because the Sino-Japanese relationship in the post-Cold War era has displayed a strange phenomenon. The Chinese recently characterised this dichotomous trend as “cold politics, hot economics” (政冷经热). Despite being one of the most important trading partners mutually, and ever deepening economic interdependence, the political relations between the two countries remain very unstable and fragile. Moreover, several key issues left from the history of recent conflicts remain unsolved and pose a genuine threat to this fragile political relationship. These unsolved bilateral issues from history have been a major source of frequent diplomatic frictions. Furthermore, the unyielding confrontational stances and positions on these issues have led to mistrust, estrangement between the two governments and a decline in mutual affections between the two societies. In general, Sino-Japanese relations in the post-Cold War era fluctuated up and down like a graph depicting the Dow Jones Index, with short burst ups and downs at two ends and a long slump in the middle (2001-2006).

Another interesting Post-Cold War phenomenon inside China that has been widely noted by scholars is the apparent rise of Chinese nationalism as a product of post-Cold War structural changes (Duara, 1996; Zheng, 1999; Deans, 2004; Gries, 2004; Zhao, 2004a; and Hughes, 2006). Many experts argue it was this revival of nationalism in China, and in Japan, has to some extent concomitantly affected the bilateral relations in the post-Cold War era (Rose, 2000; Kokubun, 2003; Gries, 2005; He, 2006; and 2007). According to some observers, the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s had dismissed Communism as a credible political ideology. Meanwhile in China, Deng's economic reform that started some ten years ago had already undermined Communist ideology in economic sense. The end of the Cold War and the Tiananmen crackdown further challenged Communist ideology in political terms. As a result, the CCP government fell back to nationalism to promote a new consensus on China political identity on domestic level; and to forge a sense of nationalistic unity in society in order to confront the tough international environment after Tiananmen. This state-led<sup>1</sup> nationalism met with a new strain of nationalism that had evolved at grassroots level prior to Tiananmen crackdown became what is known as popular nationalism in today's China.

Several Chinese experts like Whiting (1995), Gries (2005) and Rozman (2002) assert this rising popular nationalism in China is responsible for cultivating negative images and stereotypes of Japan. This in turn, gives the Chinese public a strong mindset of competitiveness rivalry with Japan. Moreover, Callahan (2010) and Shambaugh (2008) construe that Chinese popular nationalism today contains a mixture of positive and

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<sup>1</sup> This term is borrowed from Zhao (2004a).

negative imaging that characterises popular nationalism by a pride/victim complex.<sup>2</sup> Callahan argues, “China’s national aesthetic entails the combination of a superiority complex and inferiority complex. Rather than being opposites, in China, pride and humiliation are interwoven, separated only by a fine line and can easily trade places” (2010: 9). This pride/humiliation complex is the core of Chinese popular nationalism dynamics. The contrasting images of the century of shame and humiliation in the past, and China’s rapid economic growth and rising international profile shape this pride/humiliation complex, hence the dynamics of Chinese nationalism. It is also a critical element in understanding the mutually constitutive dynamics between Chinese popular nationalism and its foreign/domestic policy.

## **Objectives, Questions and Definitions**

Considering the important queries about the role of popular nationalism in China’s domestic and foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, this thesis sets out to systematically study the complex dynamics of Chinese popular nationalism and its role in China’s foreign and domestic policy considerations. This thesis seeks to answer two fundamental questions:

- I. How has popular nationalism been instrumental in China’s Japan policy *vis-à-vis* domestic politics?
- II. How and to what extent has the Chinese government managed popular nationalism in foreign and domestic policy practices?

In order to answer these two research questions, the following research problems will be addressed:

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<sup>2</sup> Callahan calls it pessoptimism.

- i) The manner, condition, and the extent to which popular nationalist pressure/sentiment in China is responsible for Beijing's policy actions to Japan.
- ii) The impact and implication of popular anti-Japanese nationalism on China's domestic politics and on foreign policy.
- iii) The scope, and the extent to which Chinese popular nationalism is managed.

Whilst not discrediting other aspect of nationalism as a concept, this work, however, only aims to explicate nationalism as a “ideational” determinant or factor. It explores the dynamic interactions between Chinese popular nationalism and its foreign *vis-à-vis* domestic politics. Through the lens of popular nationalism, the work also attempts to break down the barriers between domestic and foreign policy in order to analyse their mutually constitutive relations.

Japan represents the empirical subject in this study. The rationale for choosing Japan as the empirical subject of Chinese foreign policy is two fold. First, Japan, better than any other countries, represents the pride/humiliation spirit of Chinese nationalism today. Due to historical animosity, unsolved diplomatic issues, Japan has been the principal target of popular nationalism in China. Hence, by using Japan as the empirical case, the popular nationalism dynamics can be best explored. Second, Japan also best serves to analyse the role of popular nationalism in China's foreign and domestic politics. From foreign policy perspective, as mentioned earlier, relations between China and Japan have been unstable since the end of the Cold War. An increase in diplomatic friction arising from frequent resurrections of unsolved bilateral issues places Japan regular in the eyes of the Chinese public and policy



makers. On domestic level, not does only Japan feature predominately in Chinese popular nationalist discourse, by defeating Japanese invaders in the long struggle War of Resistance, the CCP has also seen victory over Japan a significant foundation bloc of its political legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I believe, by using Japan as the empirical subject in this work, it offers best possible specimen on which Chinese popular nationalism dynamics may be analysed.

Before setting out to this work, the definition of “popular nationalism” needs to be clarified. Considering its complexities and intersubjectivity, and for clarity and relevance, this study limits the definition of “nationalism” as follows:

A psychological condition or state of mind that sentiments of belonging, and unites a collective group of people (nation), whose members share a common identity (national identity) based on distinctive geographical, historical, cultural and emotional elements—“Self” *vis-à-vis* “Others” (Guibernau, 1996: 47).

Joseph M. Whitmeyer claims that “virtually all scholars of nationalism agree that popular nationalism has become much more widespread and important in the world since 1800 than it was previously” (2002: 322).<sup>4</sup> He defines popular nationalism in contrast to *elite* nationalism. He identifies that elites are

The people with attributes that lead them to be ranked higher and accorded more prestige and respect than ordinary people. These attributes include being politically or administratively powerful, being rich or propertied, having a title or high official rank, being well-educated, being a star, and so forth...When non-elite member of a set of people exhibit nationalism, I call it *popular* nationalism. [*emphasis in the original*] In

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three for more discussion on this.

<sup>4</sup> See also Wiebe (2001).

the historical development of different forms of nationalism, nationalism among the elites—such as aristocrats, merchants, or intellectuals—typically appears before popular nationalism does (Whitmeyer 2002: 322).

According to Whitmeyer's definition, popular nationalism is the ordinary people who express nationalism that are passed down by the elite class. In other words, for Whitmeyer, popular nationalism is actually state-led nationalism from the top. Thus, the word "popular" here only indicates the type of person who exhibits nationalism, as popular nationalists do not develop nationalistic ideas. Whilst agreeing to Whitmeyer that the elite class or government is an important agent for promoting nationalism, this work would like to argue that his definition too narrow. In contrast, this study sees popular nationalism as nationalistic feelings or movement originating at the grassroots level and spread or reinforce at the same level. Therefore, it can also be called grassroots nationalism. It is worth noting that by defining popular nationalism originated at grassroots level, it does not disregard the fact popular nationalism may have significant inputs from the state-led nationalism. In fact, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, Chinese popular nationalism in the post-Cold War era is a perfect representation of grassroots nationalism with significant state incarnation.

In addition, the work believes popular nationalism dynamics as a complex system of shared belief and perceptions that can both be utilised by nationalists to put pressure on governmental decision-making process (internal and external); and by the state to serve its domestic and foreign policy purpose. Here, popular nationalism is not a static concept, but an ever-evolving belief system that sits in the middle between domestic politics and foreign policy.

## **Theoretical Assumption**

This thesis proposes a Constructivist assumption to the key concepts, namely popular nationalism, domestic politics and foreign policy. Popular nationalism is treated as ideational belief system towards an other—out-group member. This system of belief or perception is formed by a collection of shared subjective knowledge, such as culture, history, and interests. Nationalism is seen here as presenting a set of preferences and judgements with respect to one's own and other nation states.

The thesis also adopts the stance of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). It recognises that in order to open foreign policy's "black box", ideational elements such as nationalism, culture, history, need to be taken into account. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of domestic determinants to foreign policy. The work is taking a view that domestic politics and foreign policy thus have a mutually influential relationship. On the one hand, foreign policy outcomes are heavily influenced by events that are primarily 'domestic'. On the other hand, foreign policy significantly impacts upon domestic politics. Furthermore, the thesis concur with FPA that domestic political influence on foreign policy is multi-dimensional, containing both "inputs" and "constrains".

The analytical point of departure for this work is popular nationalism. It aims to empirically explain how popular nationalism dynamic operates in China's recent Japan policy *vis-à-vis* its domestic political considerations. Exploring two recent diplomatic frictions in bilateral relations as case studies, it seeks to demonstrate popular nationalism, as an ideational factor, affecting not only China's foreign policy, and also domestic policy, such as the need to maintain social stability and public order.

Moreover, the work would also argue that foreign policy directions, such as recurrent diplomatic friction with Japan; and domestic politics, such as the patriotic education campaign in the 1990s, in return constantly shape the system of shared sentiments in Chinese popular nationalism.

In short, the principal theoretical assumption of this work is that popular nationalism and domestic politics are mutually constitutive to foreign policy.

### **Empirical Scope and Contributions**

The primary empirical research scope draws on the causal role of Chinese popular nationalism in shaping China's Japan policy since 1989. Here Chinese popular nationalism is limited to its manifestations of anti-Japanese sentiments. The analysis begins with a focus on anti-Japanese nationalist movement as a reaction to bilateral diplomatic frictions. By looking at how the Chinese state handles anti-Japanese public sentiment *vis-à-vis* its subsequent action/inaction towards Japan, the work attempts to interpret the potency of popular nationalist action in China's Japan policy considerations. However, the study does not stop at this linear level, it also considers the domestic policy implications with regards to this anti-Japanese popular nationalism. In this regard, this thesis utilises the "state" as the principal agent responsible for foreign policy and domestic politics. In the case of China, the definition of "state" is limited to the nucleus of Chinese government's decision-making body, which typically consists the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo and its Central Committee, the Foreign Affairs Office of the Central Committee (FAO), the State Council's Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In order to avoid repetition, several terms are used throughout

the thesis to represent the “state”, including Beijing, the CCP government, the leaders, the leadership, and the central government.

The study introduces two highly visible bilateral issues between China and Japan to test the assumption of mutually constitutive relations between Chinese popular nationalism, and foreign, domestic policy. The two selected cases are the 2005 anti-Japanese protest and the Diaoyu Islands dispute. The case studies are selected on the reasons of relevancy and the comparativeness. Firstly, both cases are highly relevant to the post-Cold War Chinese popular nationalist discourse insofar as they struck a nationalist chord, and aroused strong nationalistic impulses within China. Secondly, as both cases contain a study on a popular nationalist movement on different issues which happened at different points in overall bilateral relations, they can be compared in terms of the scope of the nationalist movement, and the strength and directions of state’s responses. Moreover, the two selected cases also represent the two main characteristics of the unsolved bilateral issues and the stem of which anti-Japanese sentiment evolved from. Whilst the 2005 anti-Japanese protest is predominantly a ideational/emotional issue, which is closely related to wartime history and clashing historical recognitions in two countries, the Diaoyu Islands dispute is a more tangible issue that very much touches the question of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The selection of these two qualitatively different case studies in contemporary Sino-Japanese relations is intended to ensure that this thesis can adequately address not only whether the dynamics of popular nationalism matters in China’s foreign policy, but equally to examine why, how, when, and to what extent it matters when it comes to handling highly sensitive bilateral issues that already have a strong nationalistic

connotation. To achieve this, the empirical study seeks to explain the following set of questions:

- i) How does Chinese popular nationalism respond to frictional issues in Sino-Japanese relations?
- ii) When, and under what circumstances does popular nationalism become most salient factor affecting China's policy choices regarding Japan?
- iii) Under what conditions, does popular nationalism exhibit its double-edged sword effect?
- iv) How and by what means does the Chinese state manage popular nationalism in balance with its external effects and internal implications?

Not only does this thesis show nationalism matters for China in Sino-Japanese relations, but it also furthers this notion, by breaking down the barriers between domestic and foreign policy, to identify the specific external-internal conditions and time context that determine the nationalist effect. In other words, the thesis explicitly argues popular nationalism matters in China's Japan policy, but in a dynamic and multi-dimensional way (external-internal coconstitution). It uses two case studies to demonstrate the impact of popular nationalism during specific periods, and under particular conditions, presents different yet critical challenges to Beijing's policy decisions.

Overall, the results of this academic enquiry are expected to make a supplementary contribution to the already extensive sources in the field of Sino-Japanese relations

and Chinese nationalism. The work seeks to compliment the current literature of Sino-Japanese studies by comprehensively exploring an important ideational determinant (popular nationalism) as oppose to material factors. Furthermore, by using the term “popular nationalism dynamic”, it means that the research not only analyses popular nationalism as a determinant in China’s domestic and foreign policy, but at the same time, it also examines how the CCP government manage this popular nationalism both online and in the real world. More critically, this up-to-date study also discovers a new effect of Chinese popular nationalism on the government that has yet to be picked up by the current literature, namely the “*inward outcry syndrome*”. This effect, its significance and the government’s response are evaluated in length in Chapter Five. In short, the thesis expects to add to the current popular debate of Chinese nationalism by presenting a systematic analysis of the *dynamic* nature of Chinese popular nationalism, and more crucially, by testing this dynamic in empirical cases in Sino-Japanese relations.

## **Research Design and Thesis Structure**

This qualitative study employs an interpretive approach to documentary analysis, supplemented by limited number of interviewing as the main methods. As it is not possible to gain access to the inner working circle of the decision makers in China, and for such a contemporary issue, nor is it possible to obtain classified policy directory documents, the basis of primary sources therefore derives from: a) publically available official documents, such as official publications, annual reports; b) relevant information in various published forms, including official speeches and remarks, press statements, media reports and commentaries via newspapers, magazines and the Internet. The latter, in particular, are a crucial source of

information considering the contemporary nature of this research. Media reports in Chinese language, both via official channel, such as *the People's Daily*, *China Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency*, and commercial platforms, such as *Global Times*, and various Internet information portals are widely used to reflect the state's official position *vis-à-vis* public opinions. In addition, as the Internet has become a major platform for Chinese popular nationalism to prosper, relevant weblogs, forums and messages are also consulted.

Secondary sources chosen from relevant literature in both English and Chinese languages are also essential to deepen knowledge and understanding required to tackle this complex research problem. They help to form background information, construct the theoretical framework, and support arguments.

Additionally, during a six-week fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2009, semi-constructed interviews with several prominent Chinese scholars were conducted. Unfortunately, due to the secrecy surrounding Chinese politics in general and foreign policy in particular, plus the sensitive nature of popular nationalism, I was not able to establish any direct contact with government officials. As a result, contents of the interviews will not be treated as concrete evidence, but only as supplementary supporting materials presenting a point of view.

This thesis is subsequently divided into six chapters. The first chapter constructs the theoretical framework, in which the core assumption of the thesis is discussed. Chapter Two presents an overview on the evolution of Chinese nationalism. In particular, it assesses the characteristics of Chinese popular nationalism today.



Chapter Three offers a background of the dynamics, trends and issues in Sino-Japanese relations during the post-Cold War period. Chapter Four and Five apply the core assumption into the two selected cases, the 2005 anti-Japanese protest and the Diaoyu Islands dispute, respectively. Chapter Six concludes the empirical findings and reflects the implications of this thesis and prospects of future research on this subject.

# Chapter One: Nationalism and Foreign Policy—A Dialectical Paradigm

This chapter aims to build a theoretical linkage between the two core elements of my research; namely, nationalism and foreign policy. Adopting a framework that draws broadly on Constructivist and Foreign Policy Analysis approaches, this chapter demonstrates how the relationships between nationalism and foreign policy on the one hand, and domestic politics and foreign policy, on the other, can be theorised as being mutually constitutive. Thus, the ‘dynamism’ in nationalism-foreign policy follows a dialectical paradigm, in which nationalism may act as both an important domestic *determinant* and *instrument* in foreign policy decision-making processes. In other words, not only may nationalism shape foreign policy outcomes, but it may also be instrumentalised to influence other domestic determinants (such as public opinion), and hence create the context for determining foreign policy.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a basic understanding of nationalism as a socio-political concept. It must be stressed that this thesis is not merely focused on ‘nationalism’ *per se*, but rather seeks to emphasise how this important concept can play a dynamic role in a government’s foreign policy-making. Background knowledge of nationalism is nevertheless still vitally relevant to this study, as it helps one to understand how nationalism produces and reproduces within a society, and ultimately, how nationalism shapes one’s—general public and decision-makers—perceptions toward other states. The section on nationalism is illustrated through a review on identity-building in the post-Socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe. As China had experienced similar, albeit less dramatic political

turmoil in 1989, it shows how new national identity is constructed, and how the impetus on nationalism served to consolidate political legitimacy after the collapse of Communism.

This thesis focuses on the dynamics of popular nationalism in shaping China's Japan policy. As presented in the introduction, this work undertakes the assumption that popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic policy are all mutually constitutive. The second section on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) offers essential theoretical understanding on socio-ideational and domestic aspects of foreign policy. It opens the route by which foreign policy may be studied in respect to its socio-ideational, domestic, and cultural "inputs" and "constraints".

The third section on Constructivist approach provides the theoretical rationale to bring the three elements, namely popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics, together into one interwoven, mutually constitutive dynamic.

The final section of this chapter deals with the methodological aspects of my research, and it presents how and why interpretive methods are adopted in this study to analyse the dynamic interactions between popular nationalist movement, foreign policy and domestic implications. In addition, the section also details the scope of this research and the way it was conducted.

## **1.1 Nationalism: identity of a nation/state?**

Despite prolific studies on the subject, ‘nationalism’ is still a somewhat loosely defined term. It is certainly true that nationalism emerged in Europe and the Americas during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, alongside the developing principle of national sovereignty (Tonnesson and Antlov, 1996: 2). As it will be illustrated below, several prominent scholars of nationalism have used different approaches to demonstrate how nationalism connects with concepts such as ‘nation’, ‘national identity’, and ‘nation-state’.

### **1.1.1 Nationalism Unpacked**

Anthony D. Smith, an acclaimed scholar on nationalism, defines nationalism as “a movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (1991: 73). His studies on nationalism have focused on the ethnic origins of nations (Smith, A. D., 1986). Perhaps most importantly, Smith makes a subtle distinction between pre-modern ‘ethnie’ and the modern nation. For Smith, ‘ethnies’ refers to pre-nationalist ethnic groups, which are:

named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites. [A nation, by contrast, is] a named human population which shares myths and memories, a mass public culture, a designated homeland, economic unity and equal rights and duties for all members (1995: 56-7).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See also his *National Identity* (1991:14).

Essentially, Smith's view on nationalism is that all modern nations have ancient ethnic origins and were not invented or imagined. As Tonnesson and Antlov point out, Smith's *ethno-culturalist* approach roots nationalism in pre-modern ethnies. Thus,

An ethnie becomes a nation by acquiring its own sovereign state (Germany, Poland, Cambodia), or a dynastic state establishes a bureaucratic culture into which its subjects are absorbed (China, France). In some cases it works both ways (Norway, Korea, Vietnam) (Tonnesson and Antlov, 1996: 15).

For the ethno-culturalist, what distinguishes one ethnie/nation from another are language, religion, customs, symbolic places, and more importantly, a shared history. These elements have long been embedded in popular imagination as signs of difference between various groups of people. The main significance of Smith's ethno-culturalist approach is that it allows us to see nations as having their own national forms, and more significantly, as being based on distinctive historical memories. As the subsequent chapters will show, history is an essential element for conceptualising effectively Chinese nationalism. In particular, Chinese nationalistic sentiment toward Japan is a product of the memories of Chinese people, as being the victims of the Japanese invasion and occupation.

In contrast, perhaps the main criticism directed against Smith by Tonnesson and Antlov is that he "elevates the ethnic nation—the nation built around one ethnic core—to a pre-eminent form, and that he exaggerates the collective pervasiveness of ethnic and national identities" (1996:12). The problem here is that while his emphasis on ethnicity and history are certainly important for understanding nationalism, his 'ethnies to nation-state' assumption cannot explain non-national ethnic groups, or

multi-ethnic nation states. Moreover, he also fails to offer any explanation regarding how and under what conditions these ethnies, as he has labelled them, are transformed into nations, constituting a legal-political community with a defined boundary, and integrated into the international system. This is relevant to my research because China is a multi-ethnic society and my research is not focused on ethnic nationalism, but on the state nationalism, where the term ‘Chinese nationalism’ implies the nationalism for the state of People’s Republic of China. More will be said about this below.

A second approach to nationalism is the *modernist* approach represented by Elie Kedourie (1993), Benedict Anderson (1991) and Ernest Gellner (2006). The main assumptions of this approach are that:

nationalism [is] a modern phenomenon; no national identities existed before the American and French Revolutions. Modern forms of state surveillance, industrial production and capitalist marketing depend upon the homogenization or partitioning of inconsistently organized societies into a standardized system...The modern nation-state not only represents popular sovereignty but also registers and disciplines its citizens through laws and education. (Tonnesson and Antlov, 1996: 13-4)

The foundation of Gellner’s argument, as presented in his book *Nations and Nationalism* (2006), is the distinction between the agrarian and industrial stages of human history. He thought of modernity as a distinctive form of social organization and culture, and considered nationalism to be a function of modernity (Breuilly 2006: xx). In contrast to Smith, Gellner denies the existence of nationalism in agrarian societies, situates the nationalist phenomenon primarily in the early stages of industrialization, and believes that it may fade away in more “mature, homogeneous”

industrial societies (2006: 45-6). In explaining the differences between agrarian and industrial societies, Gellner believes that in agrarian societies there was always a cultural gulf between the ruler and the ruled. High (literary) and low (non-literary) cultures existed simultaneously, with the high cultures being normally larger than any individual state, and the low cultures generally much smaller (2006: 8-18). He notes that:

[i]n the agrarian order, to try to impose on all levels of society a universalized clerisy and a homogenized culture with centrally imposed norms, fortified by writing, would be an idle dream. Even if such a programme is contained in some theological doctrines, it cannot be, and is not, implemented. It simply cannot be done. The resources are lacking (2006: 17).

Industrial society, by contrast, requires a homogeneous system of education that merges high and low culture, either by imposing the high culture on the population or by upgrading a low culture to a high culture. It is during this homogenization process, Gellner believes, that nationalism is generated (2006: 19-37). It is important to note that in Gellner's view, the main difference between an agrarian society and an industrial one is the access to education. In agrarian society, Gellner stresses, only the powerful have access to education, thus ethnic division does not present a problem. However, when the cultural homogenization required by industry sets in, uneven access to power and education between groups that lend themselves to ethnic demarcation creates a problem.<sup>6</sup> This, in turn, "gives rise to nationalism and determines its form. If some groups have little access to both power and education, they will form their own nationalisms in opposition to their rulers" (Tonnesson and

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<sup>6</sup> In Gellner's chapter on 'industrial society', he deals almost exclusively with culture, as opposed to industrial developments. He simply assumes that educational, and hence cultural, homogenization reflects industrial need.

Antlov, 1996: 4). Gellner seems, implicitly, to define industrial society as a society with a standardised system of education.<sup>7</sup>

Although Gellner's analysis has clearly established a prerequisite—a modern, industrialised society—for the birth of nationalism, he does not provide any useful information as to when the transition from agrarian to industrial society occurred in various parts of the world (Tonnesson and Antlov 1996: 5). His readers may be left with the assumption that twentieth-century African and Asian nationalism is a kind of delayed repetition of what happened in Europe when it was industrialised. As the thesis will present in Chapter Two, the evolution of Chinese nationalism differs from that of European nationalism, since modern Chinese nationalism largely evolved from the period of history when China was defeated and occupied by Western Imperialist powers, a period dubbed by the Chinese as the 'century of shame and humiliation'. It is therefore not always the case that European nationalism is a model that can be applied everywhere in the world.

In contrast to Gellner's model, Benedict Anderson (1991) offers an alternative modernist approach to nationalism by launching a sophisticated *diffusionist* [*emphasis in the original*] theory. He deals with the spread of nationalism geographically, from the Americas and Europe to its adaptation in the rest of the world. In his *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) argues that the nation is a cultural construct, not in the sense of building on ethnical or historical tradition, as Smith put it, but in being collectively imagined by all those going to the same kind of school, viewing or

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<sup>7</sup> He holds that industrial society has a "school-transmitted culture, not a folk-transmitted one". Moreover, "[t]he agrarian age of mankind is a period in which some can read and most cannot, and the industrial age is one in which all can and must read" (Gellner, 1983: 34, 36, and 77). See also Smith's support of Gellner's emphasis on mass education (1995:91-2).



listening to the same media, sharing the same mental map of the nation and its surrounding world, or visiting the same museums. In other words, there is nothing immanent or *original* about the nation. It is a construct, similar everywhere, only using different symbols. A nation is merely an imagined community.

Unlike Gellner, who finds it best to abstain from a formal definition of the term 'nation', Anderson defines it as 'an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1991: 6). One should note that to regard a community as 'imagined' does not mean it is 'imaginary'. In pre-nationalist societies there were two main dominant cultural systems: the religious community and the dynastic realm: "The religious communities were not territorial but were held together by sacred languages, and the dynastic realm was linked to a dynasty, not to an ethnic group or nation" (Tonnesson and Antlov, 1996: 7). Anderson (1991) believes that the vehicle that carried the spread of nationalism is print capitalism, and whereas Gellner focuses on education, Anderson's focus is on the media.

Whilst it is essential to gain a good understanding of these three important approaches to 'nationalism', it is imperative to explain why these theories of nationalism are relevant to the present research? To what extent, if any, they can be fitted into the case of Chinese nationalism?

Smith's ethno-culturalist approach emphasises the importance of shared history in the evolution of nationalism. This is attractive as it allows us to approach the development of nationalism in any given country from the angle of its own history. Socialist historian Eric Hobsbawm sees nationalism as having played a progressive role in an

earlier historical phase when populations fought for freedom from autocratic and imperial rule (1990: 164). China, the ancient Middle Kingdom, enjoys a particularly long history stretching back many thousands of years. The modernist approaches of Gellner and Anderson, by contrast, largely neglect the pre-industrial period. In other words, they believe that the pre-industrial period has little influence on the formulation of nationalism. Nationalism is not seen to be the result of an historical evolution; rather it is a by-product of industrialization, through mass education (Gellner date), or through the spread of print media (Anderson date). The problem with this approach is its disregard of historical facts; only the narrative matters. Nations are thus in danger of losing whatever is left of their history. For modernist theorists, national histories are merely “developmental stages” (Tonnesson and Antlov 1996: 15). Despite overlooking the importance of history, modernist approaches do provide some relevant arguments, which may be applied to Chinese nationalism. For example, Gellner’s emphasis on the evolution of nationalism through mass education is useful when considering the effectiveness of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) post-Cold War nationwide campaign of patriotic education.

The following section addresses the concept of national identity and its transformation in the case of several post-Socialist states following the ending of the Cold War, as this work believes that China in the post-Mao era shares some elements of national identity articulation with these post-socialist states.

### **1.1.2 ‘Who Are We?’-the Case of Post-Socialist States**

Following the ending of the Cold War, the fundamental changes in Russia and other Eastern European states such as Poland, Ukraine and Belarus, generated a body of

scholarship centred around post-Socialist nationalism. For many newly independent states in Central and Eastern Europe, notions of national identity have been articulated through historiography and literature (Prizel 1998: 3). Although, China, unlike Ukraine and Belarus, has had a relatively long independent statehood and freedom of sovereignty, the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and later the Tiananmen Incident had fundamentally challenged the legitimacy of communist ideology, hence the legitimacy of the ruling CCP. When the central government realised that holding onto classic communist beliefs would be no longer possible to survive, it was in desperate needs to find an alternative upon which its legitimacy could be relied. Similar to other Eastern European states, the CCP soon located nationalism and national identity as the glue that gives coherence and sense to its new ideas and policies, including foreign policies.<sup>8</sup>

If one looks closely into the political transformation of the ex-communist states in former central and eastern Europe, the original challenge to Soviet-style rule was not driven by nationalism, but by the desire of intellectuals to recreate a liberal, democratic civil society (Tismaneanu 1992). However, “nationalists soon came to dominate the process of transition and turned nationalism into the “political coin of the realm” in post communist Europe...Thus, the collapse of communism generally resulted not in the immediate triumph of tolerant, liberal democracy, but in a clear victory for nationalism over universalist ideology” (Prizel 1998: 6). In his book *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, Prizel (1998) attempts to bridge the link between nationalism/national identity and foreign policy, and to examine such interactions in three major states in central and eastern Europe; namely, Poland,

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<sup>8</sup> Detailed discussions on Chinese nationalism after Tiananmen will be presented in Chapter Two.

Russia and the Ukraine. As national identity by definition reflects a nation's characteristics against an other, so it follows that national identity is a product of contact or comparison between at least two distinct groups, namely, *us* and *other*. Hence, "the conduct of foreign policy – namely, the relations a state has with foreign states – has a strong *dialectical relationship* with national identity, the cornerstone of nationalism [*emphasis added*]" (Prizel 1998: 8).

According to Prizel, the emotional sense of nation and national identity "plays a vital role in forming a society's perception of its environment and is an extremely important, if not driving, force behind the formation of its foreign policy because national identity helps to define the parameters of what a polity considers its national interests at home and abroad" (1998: 14). A state's national identity is very much a result of how it interprets its history. Here history can be understood as a series of collective memories, in which beliefs and perceptions accumulates over time. Since collective memories of a society, much like those of individuals, are inconsistent and selective, the national identity is subject to transformation or manipulation by those in charge of the nation. Thus the transformation and manipulation of collective memories will often lead to a fundamental redefinition of national identity and, with it, the parameters of a state's national interest, and ultimately, its foreign policy directions. In contrast, although, all nations derive their sense of identity from common ancestry, language, religion, geographic location, history, cultural practices and so on, it is the acceptance or rejection of 'the other' that allows states to develop a sense of national uniqueness. In other words, a set of unique national characteristics often shapes a state's outlook on the world and forms its policies *vis-à-vis* its neighbours. More importantly, it is believed and illustrated in history that contacts,

preferably prolonged contacts or war with an *other*, will often *help* to establish an identity.<sup>9</sup> In the case of China, due to the painful experiences under foreign occupation, one of the important values of Chinese nationalism is its rejection of imperialism and hegemonism, as China saw itself as a benign power *vis-à-vis* Western countries.

In short, the dialectical relationship between national identity and foreign policy can be summarised as follows:

[N]ational identity serves not only as the primary link between the individual and society, but between a society and the world. Foreign policy, with its role as either the protector or the anchor of national identity, provides the political elite with a ready tool for mass mobilisation and political cohesion (Prizel, 1998: 19).

State socialism resulted in distinctive forms of national identity during the Soviet domination in the Eastern Bloc. In various ways, and at various levels, socialist regimes attempted to reconstruct identities, to redefine the sense of “self” and “other”, in a manner that accorded with the building of socialism. Kaiser (1997) notes that nationalism was an important issue for the communist authorities. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism noted that under conditions of developed socialism, with class antagonisms and international inequality eliminated and individuals socialised towards an international communist community, national identity would give way to an international Soviet identity:

The history of nationalism under communist rule is thus sometimes stereotyped as the

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<sup>9</sup> Bloom illustrates that England and France initially forged their national identity as a result of the Hundred Years War, which fostered in England the notion of the “Island of Virtue” and in France the national symbol of the “Maiden of Orleans” (1990: 65).

enforced removal of ethnocultural ties and national allegiances under an authoritarian state, since such nationalism was seen as alien to the project of creating an international fraternity of socialist states. (Young and Light, 2001: 944).

Many scholars in this field have noticed that, during the Cold War, states in Central and Eastern Europe were forced to lose their own national characteristics, instead, they were encouraged to see themselves as firmly part of a “socialist-bloc”, with the West being regarded in terms of a hostile enemy or “other” (Young and Light, 2001: 944; Kratochwil *et. al.*, 2006; and Verdery, 1993). As mentioned before, “collective memories” that constitute national history are an integral component of a national identity. The redefinitions of such identities within socialist states also required the construction of new national histories. Thus, under Soviet influence, pre-socialist historical trajectories in many Central and Eastern European states were discredited, and new national histories sought to present the achievements of state socialism as an historical inevitability. In many Soviet republics and Poland, the post-World War II national identities can be characterised by the politics of resentment, and state-sponsored xenophobia towards the West. This, for example, legitimised Russia’s pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy with regard to the West (Prizel, 1998: 412-3; Young and Light, 2001: 945).

The relatively stable sources of identity under socialism were disrupted or even demolished in the post-1989 period following the collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union from 1991. Post-socialism presented governments and populations of these states with a very new and uncertain context: the rapid and yet dramatic processes of political and economic reform. In this context, Verdery (1999) argues that post-socialist change needs to be seen as more than

establishing democracy and a market economy. Instead it involves an entire reordering of people's lives and "word of meaning" in these ex-Communist states. In terms of national identity, post-socialist states needed to redefine both internal and external consumption: that is, "who are we?" and "how do we want others to see us?" (Young and Light, 2001: 947).

Literature on post-socialist states tends towards two main trends in terms of redefining national identity, and subsequently foreign policy directions. The first trend concentrates on talk of a "return to Europe" and the re-orientation towards the West (Young and Light, 2001: 947). States like Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania, which have historical ties with the West, showed a great desire to rejoin Europe following their democratic reforms. For example, Verdery (1993) carefully examines the ways in which post-socialist governments in Romania de-Sovietise its national identity. Verdery claims that the Romanian government first identified the old Soviet regime as the authority that had destroyed all other bases of political organisation and Romania's own image and characteristics (1993: 182). Second, as she points out, the Romanian government skillfully portrayed Romania as the victim of Soviet domination in the Cold War and emphasised the unjust suffering of the population (Verdery, 1993: 196).

The Ukraine's experience is quite different. Prizel's study of post-socialist national identity transformation in Ukraine demonstrates both pro-Russia and anti-Russia elements. He claims that due to a lack of a unifying national mythology and heroes, and as a result of close ties with Russia, most Ukrainians did not welcome calls for a new distinct Ukrainian political and culture awareness, especially in foreign affairs

and language policy. Furthermore, in the case of Ukraine, the use of nationalism, with Russia as the “other”, not only did not galvanize the population but actually deepened the regional division across Ukraine (Prizel, 1998: 372-3). As a result, Ukraine’s political elites initially were in favour of an assertive and nationalistic foreign policy, which stood strong against Russia, in order to establish and consolidate domestic political legitimacy following independence. Then, after realising the need to maintain favourable relations with Moscow, Ukrainian leaders Kravchuk and later Kuchma appeared to have shifted Ukraine’s foreign policy back towards Russia, and away from nationalistic sentiments (Prizel, 1998: 378-401).

Finally, Leshchenko’s 2004 article on post-Soviet nation-building in Belarus presents the most pro-Russian case of national identity formation and foreign policy. She argues that Belarus, perhaps similar to Ukraine, witnessed both a failed and a (so far) successful nation-building project. Analysis of the causes of failure of one nation-building strategy and the success of the other, within the same society, offers a deeper understanding of the strength and limitations of nation-building as a political instrument (Leshchenko, 2004: 334). These two projects are defined as “National” and “Soviet”.

Immediately following independence, the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) – the main proponent of the “national” project – encouraged the government and public to get rid of the terms “Soviet” and “Socialist”, and promoted new state symbols and the use of Belarusian grammar. However, attempts to move Belarus away from Russian influence failed due to two main factors. First, the Belarusian language was insufficiently developed in the Soviet era, and was regarded as being an “inferior rural



vernacular” (Goujon, cited in Leshchenko 2004: 335). Secondly, and perhaps most crucially, Soviet and Russian influences have been deeply rooted in Belarusian history. “[B]y dismissing the Soviet period as a tragic mistake, the BPF implicitly suggested that people should dismiss large parts of their own lives. Thus instead of streaming its version of national identity into the existing social outlook, the BPF inflicted a clash in popular mentality” (Leshchenko, 2004: 337). This eventually led to the unpopularity of the BPF and reconciliation of Soviet identity since 2001, which Leshchenko believes has largely been successful thus far (2004: 341-5).

The above analysis on post-socialist nationalism has emphasised the importance of collective memory and the notion of ‘other’ in national identity construction. The construction of Chinese nationalism also heavily relied on these two elements. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, Chinese nationalism was evolved in the ‘century of shame and humiliation’. From the outset, therefore, the purpose for Chinese nationalism was to unite the nation and fight against the ‘others’ like Britain, Japan and the United States. Moreover, the collective memory of the “century of shame and humiliation” in general, the brutality of the Japanese invaders in particular made an important attribution to China’s anti-Japanese popular nationalism today.

## **1.2 Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)**

The earlier section focused on how nationalism is seen to separate *us* from *other*. This section primarily focuses on conducting relations with *others*. ‘Foreign policy’, in non-academic community, is an uncontentious, albeit vital aspect of the world of politics. In the field of International Relations (IR), however, the definition of ‘foreign’ remains highly debatable (Hill 2003: 1). For much of the post-Cold War era, the dominant discussions in the discipline of IR were about the changes in the

structure of the international system: the decline of bipolarity, and its replacement, a unipolar system or a drift towards multipolarity (Smith *et al.*, 2008: 2). Moreover, in the past twenty years, the influence of non-state actors such as nongovernmental organisations and terrorist groups, has grown significantly. This has a considerable impact on how states nowadays conduct foreign policies. It is against this backdrop that a reconsideration of foreign policy has taken root among academics (Hill, 2003: 2).

### 1.2.1 Definition

To put it simply, Christopher Hill defines foreign policy as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations” (2003: 3). The study of foreign policy is about understanding how sovereign communities<sup>10</sup> perceive and react to one and another, and how sovereign entities shape and are shaped by the international environment around them. Fundamentally, it is about asking a set of questions as ‘who acts, under what influences, for whom and with what effect?’ It is attempting to step into “the shoes of the decision-makers, and enter their world,” and to see through their eyes (Smith *et al.*, 2008: 1). Following this set of questions, a classic definition of foreign policy is provided by Walter Carlsnaes:

[Foreign policy entails] those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives

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<sup>10</sup> By using the term ‘sovereign communities’ and ‘sovereign entities’, I wish to stress that it is not necessary for the state to be the exclusive agent in foreign policy. Other entities and organisations have had a more prominent role in foreign policy in the post-Cold War international system than ever before. I concur that the analysis of foreign policy has traditionally focused on the state as the central foreign policy actor, though, it does not mean accepting the core assumptions of realism.

acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed towards objectives, conditions and actors—both governmental and non-governmental—which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy (Carlsnaes, 2002: 335).

For Carlsnaes and many IR scholars, the processes of globalisation that gained pace in the post-Cold War era created a web of interdependence that undermined the state's ability to control its own fate. It can also be argued that, at the same time, the processes of globalisation made the state more central than ever in international affairs, as populations continued to look to the state to mitigate the effect of globalisation. Thus, "globalisation and interdependence have not withered away the importance of statecraft, but these processes have made it more complicated" (Smith *et al.*, 2008: 3). For the analysis of foreign policy, this effect has made the mutually influential interactions between sovereign entities and the international settings much more intricate. Policy towards one particular state or in one area of international system may have wider and increasingly more complex implications in elsewhere. For example, by posturing a tougher stance towards Japan, China may not only damage its enormous bilateral trade with Japan, but it will undoubtedly also raise strong suspicions about the intentions of China's rise to regions beyond the Asia-Pacific.

A second area where foreign policy is of growing relevance is in terms of its contribution to how the behaviour of international actors is understood. Just as the international system can be studied according to various IR theories, foreign policy too can be analysed in the same theoretical framework.

### **1.2.2 FPA Framework**

Foreign Policy Analysis seeks to explain foreign policy, or foreign policy behaviour.

It takes as its “theoretical ground the human decision makers, acting singly and in groups that make foreign policy” (Hudson, 2008: 28). By analysis is meant not just the necessary breaking down of foreign policy into its constituent parts, concepts and processes, and the examination of the impact of its various environments. It also attempts to draw out deeper meaning than appear on the surface. In context of foreign policy, it is seeking to explain and understand action in terms of the way actors (mainly the state) constantly redefine themselves through interaction with others. *The interplay*, Hill proclaims, indeed overlaps, between “the domestic and the external sources of behaviour is central to any modern understanding of what foreign policy does, just as the interplay between the interior and exterior worlds is the way in to understanding an individual’s behaviour” (2003: xix). Understanding how foreign policy decisions are arrived at and implemented, and with what eventual consequences and implications, is not a straightforward matter. FPA provides a framework for studying the interplay between individual state actors and the international system; and between domestic and external politics.

The principal theoretical ground that characterises FPA is twofold. First, FPA helps to explain or understand decisions taken by human decision makers with regard to entities external to their nation-state. This is the ‘explanandum’, or that which is to be explained in FPA (Hudson, 2007: 4) Thus, theoretical and empirical studies on foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) have long been central to FPA (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002; Rosenau, 1980; Hollis and Smith, 1986). Usually, such decisions lead to attempts to influence directly targeting at external entities, but they may sometimes include decisions that target the domestic audience, which, in turns, have ramifications for foreign entities. As the case studies in this thesis will show, there is a

valid argument that, since the end of the Cold War, China's perceived rise of popular nationalism has affected Beijing's domestic policy considerations as much as its Japan policy. Moreover, foreign policy analysts may look at more than one decision concerning the matter, and may also focus on the different stages of decision-making, from problem recognition, framing, and perception to more advanced stages of prioritisation, contingency planning, and option assessment (Hudson, 2007: 4). Second, FPA seeks to identify factors that influence the decision-making process and more critically, the foreign policy decision makers, collectively termed as 'explanans' of FPA (Hudson, 2005: 2; Hudson, 2007: 5). Together with the 'explanandum', FPA scholars take a view that the explanation of foreign policy has many factors (Hudson, 2005: 2). As a result of the complex nature of foreign policy in general and FPDM in particular, for FPA scholars, it is essential to identify and explain *any* influential or determinant factor, external or internal, that affects the foreign policy decision-making and hence policy outcome. As a result, reflecting the diverse, comparative and multidisciplinary nature of the field, FPA integrates a variety of information across different levels of analysis, and spans numerous disciplines of sciences, from economics, sociology to geography and human psychology. It has been suggested that, "of all subfields of IR, FPA is the most radically *integrative* [*emphasis in the original*] theoretical enterprise" (Hudson, 2007: 6).

As the theoretical framework of FPA focusing on human decision makers, FPA places a strong emphasis on agent-oriented theory with an actor-specific orientation (Hudson, 2007: 6). It aims to open up the 'black box' of foreign policy to the level of individual human decision makers and places human behaviour under study. For instance, to explain the nationalism's influence on China's Japan policy, FPA is

interested in somehow finding out the answers as to ‘whether’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ the behaviour of the group of individuals that are directly involved policy making being affected by popular nationalism. By the same token, Hudson has noted that only the specific decision makers (or actors) involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis in their respective states could explain that crisis (Hudson, 2005: 3).

### **1.2.3 Level of Analysis**

One of the most interesting debates in social science during recent years has concerned the relationship between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ (McAnulla, 2002; Wendt, 1987 and 1999; Friedman and Starr, 1997; and Cerny, 1990). In its simple terms, the debate has been about whether agents (those who are capable of action, or actors) are shaped by structure. Structure, broadly speaking, are “the set of factors which make up the multiple environments in which agents operate, and they shape the nature of choices, by setting limits to the possible but also, more profoundly, by determining the nature of the problems which occur there, by shaping our very life-worlds” (Hill, 2003: 26). It is worth noting that structure exists at all levels, from the family to the international system. In foreign policy, structure does not only refer to the international system. As Martin Hollis and Steve Smith (1986) excellently demonstrated in their work, domestic system, bureaucracy and social structures are all of vital importance to the foreign policy making process. Moreover, FPA generally does not treat structures as static and concrete entities. Hill has suggested that structures are “as much conceptual as concrete entities because they often represent processes, or patterns of interaction” (Hill, 2003: 26). Furthermore, since structures

are constantly influenced by agents, they are always not regarded as fixed units with precise and easily definable qualities.<sup>11</sup>

Agents, for their part, are the entities capable of decisions with actions in any given context. They may be a single individual or collectives. Their decisions may be made by conscious intentions or by behaviour that at least in part does not result from deliberation. In the context of foreign policy, decision-making choices may be restricted, and may also result from misperception and miscalculation during the assessment and evaluation phases.<sup>12</sup> As discussed in the previous section, FPA is more interested in human actions in foreign policy decision-makings, as opposed to the state under realist assumptions in IR theory. Therefore, I concur with Hill that the term ‘actor’ is preferable to that of ‘agent’ (Hill, 2003: 27). In the case of China, for instance, actors in China’s foreign policy decision-making generally consist of the Politburo Standing Committee and the Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group.

The problem with the structure and agency debate in IR theory, as introduced by Alexander Wendt, is the one originating from two truisms: “(1) human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live; and (2) society is made up of social relationships which structure the interactions between these purposeful actors” (1987: 337-8). If one follows his line of thought on human beings in society, the problem is that we lack “a self-evident way to conceptualize these entities and their relationship” (Wendt, 1987: 338; see also Hollis and Smith, 1991: 393-4). This appears to be an ontological

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<sup>11</sup> Fuller treatment on the dynamic relations between structure and agency are provided in ‘Towards A Constructivist Approach’ section.

<sup>12</sup> See Jarvis (1976), an excellent and comprehensive study on perception and misperception in international politics. His later works (1986; and Jarvis *et al.*, 1985) went further to investigate the psychological impact on perception and judgement in FPDM.

problem of how to clearly conceptualise one entity, namely, structure or agency. In other words, according to Wendt, it seems that conceptualisation of structure cannot exist separately from that of agency, and *vice versa*. Although quite a number of well-developed theoretical threads in IR covering the phenomena such as institutions, systems, group dynamics, domestic politics, attempts at integrating multiple theoretical points-of-departure are typically absent or even resisted (Hudson 2002: 4). In the context of FPA, it can be argued that the ‘level-of analysis problem’ occurs when many theoretical efforts posit that phenomena can be best explained by a focus on a certain level of analysis, either domestic politics or the international system. In order to address this concern, FPA scholars have conducted extensive research into both micro and macro levels of analysis, with some even integrating the two together (Zhao, 1996).

### *Dual-Aspect Setting*<sup>13</sup>

The groundbreaking work in FPA by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin views foreign policy decision makers as “operating in dual-aspect setting so that apparently unrelated internal and external factors become related in the actions of the decision-makers” (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 75).] Decision-makers operating within this dual-aspect setting must simultaneously play a ‘two-level game’. Robert Putnam (1988) has likened the decision makers to players simultaneously playing on two linked game boards: the game board of domestic politics and the game board of international politics. What happens in international politics cannot fail to have an effect on domestic politics; outputs of domestic politics certainly have an impact on international politics.

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<sup>13</sup> The term is borrowed from Snyder *et. al.* (2002).



Similarly, James Rosenau (1967), regarded as the pioneer of FPA<sup>14</sup> and the first academic to conceptualise the domestic sources of foreign policy, also agreed that scholars shall systematically and scientifically break down the divide between internal and external factors in analysing a nation state's behaviour. Furthermore, he added that to "recognize that foreign policy is shaped by internal as well as external factors is not to comprehend how the two intermix or to indicate the conditions under which one predominates over the other" (Rosenau, 1966: 98). It must be stressed that in this dual-aspect setting, there is a two-way flow arising from the distinction between the foreign and the domestic. In other words, as Hill puts it, "foreign policy has its domestic sources, and domestic policy has its foreign influences" (2003: 39).

Within this dual-aspect setting, numerous research pathways were developed to theorise all aspects of foreign policy decision making (FPDM), such as small groups dynamics (Snyder *et al.*, 2002; Janis, 1982; Hermann, 1978; and Vertzberger, 1990), organisational and bureaucratic processes (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Halperin, 1974; and Allison and Halperin, 1972), and psychological and societal settings of FPDM<sup>15</sup> (Sprout, H. and Sprout, T., 1956; and 1965; Jarvis *et al.*, 1985; Jarvis, 1986; and Cottam, 1977). These works are very significant in terms of having laid a sound theoretical foundation for FPA practitioners to build their empirical studies upon. Nonetheless, as this research is not wholly centred on the theorisation of FPA, more prominent concentration will be placed on the three theoretical elements that appears to routinely be faced by foreign policy decision makers; namely domestic politics-foreign policy, action-reaction-interaction,<sup>16</sup> and national/culture-foreign policy.

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<sup>14</sup> According to Hudson (2008: 14).

<sup>15</sup> Hudson (2007: Ch 3) provides a good summary of the literature on group decision-making: small group dynamics and bureaucratic politics.

<sup>16</sup> This term is borrowed from Snyder *et al.* (2002: 55).

#### 1.2.4 Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy

If war is the continuation of politics by other means, pace Clausewitz, then it is certainly also the case that many times foreign policy is simply that continuation of domestic politics by other means (Hudson, 2007: 125)

Foreign policy decision makers often have to face many different directions at once. Arguably, one of the most critical aspects for decision makers is how to deal with the ‘inside’ of their own community. One may even further this argument, as did Hudson, to say that the decision makers serve their own state, and ultimately are responsible for their own constituents ‘inside’, as opposed to the ‘outside’ for which they have no formal responsibility. In other words, the root of foreign policy is a domestic one, “the domestic and the foreign...literally make no sense except in relation to each other”<sup>17</sup> (Hill, 2003: 219). On the one hand, foreign policy outcomes are heavily influenced by events that are primarily ‘domestic’. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, China was in a complete self-imposed isolation from diplomatic ties with most other states, due to the irrational Communism rhetoric being filled in the whole country. On the other hand, foreign policy significantly impacts upon domestic politics. The latter chapters will demonstrate how easy it is for domestic-based popular nationalism to be erupted in China as a result of diplomatic frictions with Japan. Domestic politics and foreign policy thus have a mutually influential relationship. This section deals with these two interdependent dimensions and discusses the general relationship between the domestic and the foreign. Since this research focuses on foreign policy, the main attention is therefore focused on the domestic influences on foreign policy.

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<sup>17</sup> This is not, however, to say that they are identical.

What does the notion of ‘domestic influences’ refer to? Here, Hill remarks that it is important to distinguish between the different ways in which the “domestic environment impinges on foreign policy” (2003: 220). For Hill, the term ‘domestic sources’ implies that the domestic sphere provides both inputs and constraints for foreign policy. However, it is arguable whether ‘inputs’ or ‘constraints’ depend on the points of view of the foreign policy decision makers. For instance, if the decision maker agrees with the lobbyist on a particular issue in foreign policy, then it can be said that a domestic lobby has successfully managed to convey the opinion across to the decision maker and has made ‘inputs’ in foreign policy decision-making. Equally, same scenario may also be interpreted as the strong domestic lobby on this particular foreign policy has put ‘constraints’ on foreign policy makers, limiting their freedom of manoeuvre and policy choices. Strong opinions of the French farmers, inhibiting any wish the French government might have to reform the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union (EU), is a well-known example. Contrary to Hill’s claim, which ‘input’ and ‘constraints’ need to be specified separately (2003: 220-1), this thesis takes the position that rather than distinguish domestic ‘inputs’ from ‘constraints’, it is more important to investigate the dynamic interactions between domestic and international politics. Laura Neack nicely summarises this double-sided nature of foreign policy<sup>18</sup>:

Foreign policy is neither fish nor fowl in the study of politics, but an empirical subject matter straddling the boundary between the internal and the external spheres of a state. Such policy is conducted in complex internal and international environments; it results from coalitions of active actors and groups situated both inside and outside state

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<sup>18</sup> Hill also notes: “Foreign policy is at hinge of domestic politics and international relations” (2003: 23).

boundaries; its substance emanates from issues of both domestic and international politics; and it involves processes of bargaining and compromise affecting the interests of both domestic and international groupings (Neack, 2003: 8-11).

The domestic-foreign paradigm in FPA makes four important assumptions. First, scholars of FPA argue that the nature of domestic influence on foreign policy is multi-dimensional; single-factor explanations rarely convince where multiple actors and levels of activity, such as decision-making, are involved. Studies of domestic influences on foreign policy cover all aspects of domestic politics, but most notably bureaucratic and organisational structures (see for example, Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Halperin, 1974; and Allison and Halperin, 1972); the media and public opinion (e.g. Craig, 1976; Risse-Kappen, 1991; Jordan and Page, 1992; Hoge, 1994; Robinson, 1999; Soroka, 2003; Frensey and Michaud, 2006; and Mor, 2006); and culture and identity in foreign policy (Hudson 1997, 1999; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Katzenstein, 1996; Schafer, 1999; Hudson and Sampson; Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996; and Nabers, 2009). Hill explains, “the internal affairs of most transnational actors are too robust to be dominated by one pressure group, or set of stake-holders” (2003: 221). Consequently, when looking into the impact of the domestic on foreign policy, one needs not only to identify multiple factors, but also to seek to answer why and how these factors impact on foreign policy.

Secondly, in order to capture the inextricability of foreign and domestic concerns from the viewpoint of the policy maker, FPA believes that decision makers are always faced with these two sets of concerns, and that the two sets of concerns continually interact. As discussed above, foreign policy decision makers work in a dual-aspect setting, where they are seen as playing politics simultaneously on two levels, the

domestic and the international (Putnam, 1988). Therefore, foreign policy must be understood as a continuous stream of domestic inputs, no less than international.

Furthermore, the notion of a stream of domestic input in foreign policy goes well beyond the image of decision makers simply juggling two balls, domestic issues and international politics. Ideational factors such as culture, values, and identity also shape the perception of the policy maker; hence, they subsequently impact foreign policy. Finally, no foreign policy can be implemented without a domestic grounding. In other words, it cannot be taken for granted that domestic support will ultimately sustain foreign policy. If the support for a foreign policy, either in domestic politics or among the general public, weakens, it will damage the political administration of the regime at the very least, and may even lead to the complete change of the domestic political landscape. The United States' prolonged involvement in Vietnam, and Tony Blair's recent unpopular war in Iraq proved domestically unsupported foreign policy decisions may destabilise the domestic political landscape.

Having identified the proximity of domestic actors to foreign policy decision-making positions, it is then worth observing how cohesive or fragmented each actor is. Joe Hagan (1993) has developed the variable of regime fragmentation, in which he classifies regimes according to the degree to which a regime is plagued by divisions. For example, his scale classifies as least fragmented (or most cohesive) those that are dominated by a single leader and classified as most fragmented those regimes that are a coalition of autonomous political groups with no clear dominant group. Thus, Hagan finds that the more fragmented the regime, the more constraints it faces in foreign policy (Hudson, 2007: 129). Helen Milner (1997) supports Hagan's argument,

as she too believes that divided regimes are less likely to be able to cooperate internationally.

In addition to proximity and cohesiveness, Hudson further notes that the size of the domestic actor in question and the degree of difference in viewpoint between the domestic actor and the regime's foreign policy are also essential factors for determining the relative influence of a domestic actor on foreign policy (2007: 129-130). The bigger the size of domestic public opinion and the greater the difference in view point, the greater the degree of influence of domestic considerations may place over the external issue at hand. For instance, broader society may generally be located distant from the state's foreign policy decision-making core, and public opinions may often not so homogenous. That said, the size of the general public is however enormous. Therefore, if the public generates a largely cohesive opinion, which has a great degree of difference from that of the decision-maker, over a particular foreign policy, it then becomes a powerful force that is likely to significantly affect the decision-making and/or the outcome of the policy in question. In other words, public opinion may have considerable weight over foreign policy, if it is strong and unified, despite being far away from the decision-making institution.

A final dimension to the study of the characteristics of domestic attributes to foreign policy is how active a particular foreign policy actor has been on a given foreign policy issue. Large, powerful domestic actors can be totally disinterested in a particular foreign policy (Hudson, 2007: 130). Similarly, it is perfectly conceivable that for many foreign policy decisions, the general public may remain largely disinterested hence inactive to which policy direction the regime may take. This

brings out another fundamental conceptual belief in FPA, which is that the relations between foreign policy and its determinants *never remain static*, and are constantly evolving through interactions over time and over different issues. Similar to the theoretical foundations of Constructivism, this thesis has taken the view that these factors, being foreign policy, domestic politics, identity or international system, are not static concepts, but mutually constituted with one another. In order to analyse this complex relationship, it is time to introduce the second of the three paradigms, namely action-reaction-interaction theory.

The domestic ‘inputs’ and ‘constrain’ to foreign policy are important to the understanding of the role of popular nationalism in shaping foreign policy decisions. Nationalistic sentiment and public opinions, this study argues, would place pressure on decision makers to adopt a tougher stance and policy, otherwise, the nationalistic public opinion, as shown in Chapter Five, could quickly turn against the state.

### **1.2.5 Action, Reaction and Interaction**

Actions in foreign policy are perhaps the most valuable and tangible subjects for FPA scholars. They are often the starting point for researcher to open up the ‘black box’ of foreign policy. This is because there is always a great degree of secrecy surrounding issues concerning foreign policy, thus it is nearly impossible for FPA researchers to witness the whole decision-making process. Moreover, in authoritarian states like China, it is unfeasible for researchers to establish a direct personal contact with the decision-maker. The decision-maker in question may not necessarily need to come out and explain rationales behind foreign policy actions. As a result, it is usually the case

for FPA scholars to use actions, reactions and interactions as the point of departure to interpret and understand foreign policy.

Snyder *et. al.*—being regarded as one of the first [originally published in 1962] and most comprehensive works on FPA—observed that:

we believe that those who study international politics are mainly concerned with the actions, reactions, and interactions among political entities called national states. Emphasis on action suggests *process* [emphasis original] analysis, that is, the passage of time plus continuous changes in relationship—including the conditions underlying change and its consequences. Since there is a multiplicity of actions, reactions, and interactions, analysis must be concerned with a *number of processes* [emphasis original] (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 55).

Foreign policy actions take many forms, such as declarations, formal agreements, diplomatic meetings, official visits, financial assistance, armed conflicts, and so on. In general, action arises from the need to establish, to maintain and to regulate contact between states. It represents a planned attempt—rather than random behaviour—to achieve certain aims.<sup>19</sup> Snyder *et. al.* noted the components required for actions to exist; namely actor(s), goals, means and situation (2002: 58). They went further to explain:

[t]he situation is defined by the actor (or actors) in terms of the way the actor (or actors) relates himself to other actors, to possible goals, and to possible means, and in terms of the way means and ends are formed into strategies of action subject to relevant factors in the situation. These ways of relating himself to the situation (and thus of

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<sup>19</sup> For theories of action, see Parsons and Shils (1953).



defining it) will depend on the nature of the actor—or his orientations” (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 58).

Reactions take the same form, only they are viewed as responses (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 55-6). Here, two concepts need to be clarified further. First, ‘the situation’, coined by Snyder *et. al.*, represents the setting and circumstance that decision-makers may be faced upon in FPDM. Not only does this include the policy issue itself, but it may also incorporate the projected action as well as the reasons for the action by decision-makers. Understanding the way decision-makers as actors define their situation is the key to the explanation of why the state behaves the way it does (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 59). In order to comprehend how decision-makers define their situation, it is therefore, according to Snyder *et. al.*, necessary to analyse decision-makers (actors) in the following terms: (a) what are their rational perceptions towards objects, conditions and their counterparts (decision-makers from other states in context)?; (b) what do they aim to achieve from the outcome—the foreign policy objectives, and how are these objectives established?; (c) what are the likely impacts of the possible courses of action—the estimated significance of the projected action; (d) what are the norms, common practices, and ‘standard of acceptability’ for dealing the issues in question (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 59).

Snyder *et. al.* identified three features of the orientation of foreign policy decision-makers: perception, choice, and expectation (2002: 59). It can be argued that these features are outcomes of the analysis involved in defining the situation. Perception arises from both policy makers’ assessment of objects and conditions; and the norms and ‘standard of acceptability’, which incorporates cultural norms. Policy choices are first and foremost dependent on foreign policy objectives and the significance of the

perceived courses of action. Moreover, the application of norms and common practices may also narrow the number of alternative choices (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 59). Finally, decision-makers' expectations can be identified by assessing the foreign policy objectives and the likely impacts of foreign policy actions. Within this context, nationalism, being an ideational factor, helps policy makers to contract a distinctive set of perception towards another state, which in turn helps to shape policy orientations (e.g. friends or foes).

It should be stressed that the action-reaction-interaction suggests that sequences of action and interaction are not always linear and closed. This implies that, first, there may be more than two states involved in a certain foreign policy issue. Actions and reaction of all participants may or may not have a reciprocal relationship (Snyder *et. al.*, 2002: 55). For instance, if state A acts, states B and C then respond to state A, therefore, state A has a reciprocal relationship with both states B and C. There is nevertheless no interaction between states B and C. Second, as previously demonstrated, not only is this paradigm applicable to interstate relations, but it may also explain intrastate relations, between domestic politics and foreign policy within one state. In other words, it is worth exploring actions, reactions and interactions in both interstate and intrastate relations when analysing foreign policy. FPA may apply this paradigm at various levels of analysis, be it at international level, where the state as a whole being the actor, or at state level, where individual decision-makers being the actor. Third, this thesis examines how internal actions, reactions and interaction between domestic politics, identity and foreign policy provide the conditions in which foreign policy decision-makers conduct their interstate action and reactions. This assumption is central for the construction of the thesis's theoretical framework, which

attempts to combine *two dialectical paradigms*, namely nationalism-domestic politics, and nationalism-foreign policy by adopting a constructivist approach.

#### **1.2.6 Culture and Foreign Policy**

During the Cold War period, the effects of culture and national identity on foreign policy were arguably overlooked in favour of ‘realpolitik’ and ideological struggle. Intense rivalry between the two superpowers possibly dwarfed ideational factors in foreign policy (Hudson, 2007: 103). Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a great increase of academic interest in cultural and identity politics, with many works focusing on both theoretical and empirical studies of cultural and ideational influences in foreign policy (e.g. Hudson, 1997; 1999; and 2007; Huntington, 1993; and 2002; Pye, 1991; Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996; and Katzenstein, 1996). This sudden flourishing of cultural studies within the broader discipline of Political Science (Inglehart, 1988) and more particularly FPA, placed national identity and culture as important factors among the considerations that shape foreign policy decision-making. As deliberated in previous sections, when one inquires about the process of foreign policy decision-making and the determinants of foreign policy outcomes, one simply cannot ignore the fundamental socialisation that political leaders receive in their respective national culture. This socialisation, as Hudson expresses, “filled with history and legend, heroes and enemies, successes and failures, God and luck, form[s] much of the basic architecture of political belief systems” (2007: 103). Hence, it is simply not feasible for one to interpret Chinese foreign policy without an adequate understanding of Chinese culture and history, for example. For this thesis, it is unachievable to research China’s relations with Japan without a good reference to the deep traditional Confucian cultural influence on China’s self-perceived position in the

world *vis-à-vis* the resentment held by many in the country against Japan due to the antagonist contemporary history between the two states.

Cultural differences affect behaviour in most parts of our social life, including foreign policy decision-making. Most scholarly studies on culture are to be found in fields of anthropology, sociology and other related disciplines. Early attempts by IR scholars to examine the national cultural character's impact on foreign policy before the end of the Cold War attracted criticisms, most notably by Lucian Pye, who asserted that culture quickly becomes "the explanation of last resort" (1991: 504), whereby the scholar only ascribes 'cultural differences' to anything that cannot be explained by existing theories of FPA. This is merely stating the existence of cultural differences and what the differences are, but it fails to explain why differences occur, as actual reasons for the differences had never been properly theoretically addressed in FPA.<sup>20</sup> It is against the backdrop of the actor-specific theory gaining increasing popularity in FPA (Hudson, 2005) and the general political condition of the post-Cold War world, that cultural research has been incorporated into the studies of foreign policy.<sup>21</sup>

Culture as a sociological concept, can be very straightforward and yet extremely elusive. It is a straightforward concept because everyone has experienced interactions with someone who does something differently from one's own actions, due to a diverse cultural background. Different customs, different traditions, different ways of meeting people and doing things and so on, are all very tangible and real. In contrast, culture becomes rather elusive when one attempts to clearly define it in a theoretical

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<sup>20</sup> Pye argues that the explanations such as "the Chinese act that way because that is the Chinese way" are never explanations at all (1988: 6).

<sup>21</sup> The first book in the post-Cold War era exclusively on theoretical research agenda of culture and foreign policy is Hudson (1997).

sense: “The difficulty is not so much centred on what to *include* in such a definition, but rather what to *exclude* [*emphasis in the original*]” (Hudson, 1997: 2). If one takes the assumption that the human mind is subjective and that cultural difference is one of the most primary and significant factors to differentiate this subjection, culture can thus be anything and everything in one’s mind. Culture may be “any interpersonally shared system of meanings, perceptions, and values” (Jacquin *et. al.*, 1993: 375). Studies on culture have long been a prominent sub-field in anthropology and sociology. Numerous scholars have attempted to conceptualise culture,<sup>22</sup> and all definitions seem to emphasise culture as shared patterns of meanings embodied in common knowledge and symbols that are historically transmitted to distinct human groups by means of language. It is through this system of meanings, namely culture, that people adapt to the structure of their lives and conduct interpersonal activities. Fundamentally, culture, like nationalism, is not a static concept. On the one hand, it constitutes an in-group characteristic structure under which people interact with both inside and outside. Culture on the other hand is constantly redeveloped and reconstituted by these interactions. When it comes to explaining foreign policy, however, such a general definition of culture can hardly contribute towards a useful and practical theoretical framework of analysis, because indeed all human activity—including foreign policy—becomes both “a product of and a component of culture” (Hudson, 1997: 3). In order to identify and analyse the impact of culture on foreign policy, one must deconstruct culture as a social concept.

First and foremost, culture is a system of shared meanings. Social anthropologist such as Clifford Geertz provided ways to interpret this system of shared meaning—

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<sup>22</sup> See for example for some definitions of culture, Geertz (1973); LeVine (1973); D’Andrade (1984); and Triandis (1994).

how is it constructed, perpetuated, and modified—through detailed observations as a result of being embedded into the society in question.<sup>23</sup> Because meanings are shared through interpersonal expressions, such as conversations, media, art, writing and music, Geertz argues that it is essential to understand all of these so called “symbols” from the in-group perspective (or thick description, to adopt Geertz’s description), as opposed to observing as an outsider<sup>24</sup> (1973: 3-33). When comparing certain social phenomenon from one culture to another, cultural differences are discovered. Consequently, the interface between culture and foreign policy can be established through studying and comparing shared meanings (culture) in foreign policy and foreign policy making. Rather than accepting preferences, beliefs and perceptions in international relations, as Realist scholars, a new generation of scholars asks how they are formed (Hudson, 1997: 10). For example, researchers in Chinese foreign policy and nationalism have often noted juxtaposed and yet contradictory meanings of national identity widely shared in contemporary Chinese society. On the one hand, the pride of 5000 years of glorious civilisation, and the humiliation of being victim at the hand of Western and Japanese imperialism on the other. As fuller discussion will be offered later, this profound shared system of meanings forms the core value for Chinese popular nationalism.

Second, foreign policy is a formal affair of one state with another. From a cultural perspective, foreign policy is at the frontline of cultural clashes, as relations with out-groups easily expose cultural differences. In the aforementioned *us v others* debate on national identity, “out-groups serve simultaneously as source of national identity (we are not like them) and as a threat to national identity (we must resist becoming like

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<sup>23</sup> See his famous study on Balinese cockfight (Geertz, 1973: 412-454).

<sup>24</sup> Particularly, see the discussion on two boys winking (Geertz, 1973: 5-7).

them)” (Hudson, 1997: 11). The cultural divide constantly occurs in the state’s relations with other states; thus, the temptation and rationale to theorise one state’s culture with how it performs in international relations is fairly strong.

Finally, culture indicates our preferences, tells us what to want, to prefer, to desire. It represents a social value. Understandings of culture may help researchers to interpret certain predictable behaviour. For example, the Chinese strongly hold Confucian values, including the Doctrine of the Mean (中庸 or the Middle Way), and The Ethic of Reciprocity (never impose upon others what you do not choose for yourself). These core cultural references have greatly influenced China’s foreign policy strategies for over 50 years. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence<sup>25</sup> put forward by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1954 epitomise the Confucian rule of Ethic of Reciprocity. Deng Xiaoping’s 24-character<sup>26</sup> strategy on foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, to observe calmly, keep a low profile, and try not to become the leader, is attributed to the Doctrine of the Mean. In addition, China’s tendency to passing moral judgement upon other states and to claiming the moral high ground in international affairs could also be argued to be in line with Confucian teachings on virtue and morality supremacy rule.

Due to the elusive nature of being anything and everything, in practice, it is rather difficult to first prove the causal link between cultural variables and foreign policy

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<sup>25</sup> They are 1) mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territory integrity; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual benefit; and 5) peaceful coexistence.

<sup>26</sup> The 24 characters are: 冷静观察，站稳脚跟，沉着应付，韬光养晦，善于守拙，决不当头 (observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership).

outcomes. It is then not always possible to directly observe cultural effects on foreign policy. Yaacov Vertzberger sums up this problem perfectly:

It is extremely difficult to positively prove the casual links, direct and indirect, between societal-cultural variables and foreign-policy-related information processing. The difficulty in directly observing societal-cultural effects, however, does not prove the opposite, that is, that societal-cultural influences are minor or negligible (Vertzberger, 1990: 261).

Holsti's work (1970) on national role conception made an important contribution in solving this problem by expanding the cultural syndrome onto a national level. It describes how a nation's leader conducts activities with respect to foreign relations through the articulated vision of both his/her nation's and the subjected nation's role in world affairs that the leader holds. This vision, Holsti argues, corresponds to deep cultural beliefs about the nation. However, it is not until the rise of Constructivism in IR that the theoretical bridge between identity, culture and foreign policy has been neatly constructed.<sup>27</sup>

### **1.3 Towards A Constructivist Approach**

Having deconstructed several principal concepts for this research, this section explores the core theoretical assumption of this thesis. The section will first discuss a Constructivist approach towards FPA, and why it provides a logical theoretical assumption from which to engage this research. By adopting a Constructivist

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<sup>27</sup> See Vendulka Kubalkova's edited volume (2001) for a well-structured study on introducing Constructivism into Foreign Policy Analysis.



approach, this study argues, the primary elements of the thesis, namely popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics, may be theoretically connected.

It is well documented that an academic split between FPA and IR occurred in 1950s, when scholars of foreign policy and international relations went their separate ways (Kubalkova, 2001b: 19). Whilst IR placed structure—the anarchic nature of international system—as the prominent feature of consideration, FPA was more interested in the agent—decision-making bodies—in international politics and traditionally downplayed the importance of structure.

Since the late 1980s and the early 1990s, with the ending of the Cold War, Constructivism as a new approach was introduced to IR, which seeks to break down the FPA/IR divide.<sup>28</sup> Mainstream Constructivists disapprove of the way FPA/IR split developed (Palan, 2000), as they strongly argue that agent and structure “should never be torn apart nor should one be given priority over the other” (Kubalkova, 2001b: 19). In other words, mainstream Constructivism renounces favouritism towards either the structure or the agent. Instead, it stresses that emphasis should be placed on processes of social construction. As a result, unlike Realism, which focuses on material capability or “brutal facts” (Brown, 2001), Constructivism seek “social facts”, which depend for their existence on “what we believe about them, and indeed whether we believe in them at all” (Houghton, 2007: 28). Moreover, Constructivists believe that social meaning is the principal concept in IR. In other words, the question of “how facts are interpreted?” is far more important than the facts themselves. Essentially, sovereignty, power, and material capability have no meaning for Constructivists until an interpretation and perception is placed upon them. The most crucial elements in

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<sup>28</sup> Nicolas Onuf was first to introduce the term “Constructivism”. See Onuf (1989).

human society are human beings, as it is they who have the capacity to change meanings (by altering interpretations). Human beings or agents do not exist in isolation from the structures they create (Onuf, 1989). To put it simply, in a mainstream Constructivist world everything depends on what individuals or states make of it (Wendt, 1992; and Palan, 2000).

In his influential volume *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), Alexander Wendt defines Constructivism as follows:

Constructivism is a structural theory of the international system that makes the following core claims: (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the state system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics (Wendt, 1999: 193).

The core assumption of Constructivism is that agents and structures are mutually constitutive. Human beings (agents) evolve within the society (structures) they have created; the society advances along with the evolution of human beings. In IR terms, states (agents) exist and develop within the international system (structure) that progresses through actions and interactions between states. While not denying the importance of material factors, ontologically speaking, Constructivists believe that the social world is being made by people who in turn are made, thus the world is seen as a never-ending construction project (Kubalkova, 2001c: 58-61).

But how are the interpretations done? What elements do we use to decode actions? This brings another central assumption for Constructivism; that is “ideas matter”, in particular collective ideas and norms (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). This is an important assumption to demonstrate the co-constitution of structure and agency. Ideas and ideational factors are critical for Constructivists. It is through the construction of both identities and interests that mutual constitution occurs (Houghton, 2007: 29). Here, for Constructivists, ideas or ideational factors can be any determinants that are influential to our perception and belief system. While nationalism, for example, may be taken as an ideational factor as a whole, it may also be deconstructed into various smaller ideas or norms, such as culture, philosophy, religion, history and so on. Objectives and actions in international politics, nonetheless, cannot be understood in isolation from these ideational factors. Concepts such as sovereignty and national interests thus, are not objectively given, but must be interpreted through ideas.

Following this line of assumptions, it is not difficult to understand mainstream Constructivists’ argument that material forces by themselves have no intrinsic meaning, and their meanings are socially created (constructed) by human beings and their ideas (Wendt, 1995; and 1999). Ted Hopf notes:

Determining the outcome will require knowing more about the situation than about the distribution of material power or the structure of authority. One will need to know about the culture, norms, institutions, procedures, rules, and social practices that constitute the actors and the structures alike (Hopf, 1998: 173).

For instance, the possession of nuclear weapons by Britain and France has a fundamentally different meaning to the US government than such possessions by North Korea or Iran. Material capability on its own explains nothing here. Although the weapons may be identical, the stockpiles in Britain and France are not viewed to be as threatening to the United States as those from North Korea or Iran.<sup>29</sup> The reason for this, Constructivists believe, is that Washington D.C. has *constructed* a very different shared knowledge (identity) for Britain and France from North Korea and Iran. It is based on the current international structure and the beliefs and ideas of the Americans that a distinct identity; namely allies and enemies, Britain and North Korea, respectively. Constructivists, while not denying the existence of material reality, believe that it cannot be known outside human subjective knowledge (Zehfuss, 2002: 25). To sum up, a Constructivist approach to IR holds a subjective ontological position, whereby actions and interests in international politics are constituted by ideas and identities, not somehow objectively given.

This emphasis on the ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge, and ideational factors, is also predominantly evident in Foreign Policy Analysis,<sup>30</sup> as FPA opens up the state as a black box and looks into those personal, ideational, and cultural factors affecting foreign policy decision-making that Realist and Liberal theories alike tend to overlook. Kubalkova comments: “it is worth noting that FPA began in earnest by introducing certain elements that many constructivists and postmodern scholars would later take up” (2001: 27). From the discussions in the previous section on Foreign Policy Analysis, it is not hard to discover several constructivist-type concerns in FPA; namely, the structure-agency debate, identity and culture in foreign policy. As the aim

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<sup>29</sup> This example was first used in Wendt (1995: 73-74).

<sup>30</sup> Houghton (2007) presents that Social Constructivism as an umbrella of theoretical perspectives that shares much in common with Foreign Policy Analysis.

of FPA is to open-up the black box that is the state, from the very beginning FPA has always been interested in ideational factors in IR<sup>31</sup> (Hudson, 2002: 1). FPA scholars, like Constructivists, do not see foreign policy as an objectively given concept, as they do not engage foreign policy exclusively at the structural level (as opposed to Realists and Neoliberals). Instead they tend to question how to treat the perceptions and intentions of those officials who make foreign policy. To be more precise, they are particularly interested in the process of how actors interpret, decide, pronounce, and implement foreign policy, and the determinants along the way. Steve Smith sees foreign policy at least “in part a social construction; it is what the actors decide it will be” (2001: 38). He goes on to proclaim “[s]ocial construction and foreign policy analysis look made for one another...[and to coin with Wendt’s famous assertion] Foreign policy is what states make of it” (Smith, 2001: 38).

It is this shared intersubjectivity that marries Constructivism with FPA, believed to fit well in this research on Chinese popular nationalism’s role in shaping China’s foreign policy *vis-à-vis* its domestic politics. Not only does this approach shift the focus onto the inextricable link between individuals (decision makers) and their social contexts (nationalism and domestic society), but it also broadens researchers’ understanding of what foreign policy making is. In other words, in any particular situation, what policy makers are doing goes beyond making choices among options, the availability of options is socially constructed. Their hands may well have been ‘tied’ by social orders before any decision is made: “Foreign policy thus becomes a practice that produces a social order as well as one through which individual and collective subjects themselves are produced and reproduced” (Doty, 1993: 301). Introducing

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<sup>31</sup> See the foundational work by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (2002), originally published in 1962.

Constructivism to FPA, it enables the researcher to address the construction of subjects themselves, such as identity, national interests, which in turn, improves the overall interpretation of policy outcomes.

Not only can a Constructivist approach be adopted in FPA, throughout this work, nationalism is also given Constructivist connotations. It treats nationalism as a state of mind consisting of a system of beliefs that is socially constructed by collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions. Representing the characteristics of a nation's identity, nationalism depends on how one understands and views events and agents. Hence, variation exists when nationalism is understood by different people from diverse social backgrounds and/or same groups of people through different timeframes. Emanuel Alder supports this notion by arguing that a group of people, a nation or nations are neither "entirely determined by...forces and constraints", or depended solely on "individual preferences and rational choice. It is also a matter of their shared knowledge, the collective meaning they attach to their situation, their authority and legitimacy, the rules..." (1997: 321). By adopting Constructivist assumptions, nationalism is seen to present a set of preferences and judgements with respect to one's own and other nation states, which may explain patterns of predictable behaviours. As Hopf notes:

Identities are necessary, in international politics and domestic society alike, in order to ensure at least some minimal level of predictability and order...In telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors" (Hopf, 1998: 173-175).

It is nevertheless no surprise that ‘nationalism’, as a hotly debated concept, has attracted great attention globally from scholars in political science and sociology. Most aspects of the concept have already been thoroughly studied. It is not only impossible but also more importantly, academically undesirable to cover all aspects of ‘nationalism’ in a single research piece. The aim of this thesis is not merely focused on ‘nationalism’ *per se*. Instead it emphasises how this important concept may play an instrumental role in government’s policymaking. By “instrumental”, it does not necessarily imply a government’s intention to encourage/restrict certain popular nationalist sentiment to best serve its overall domestic and/or foreign policies. It is worth noting that whilst this study does not deny that nationalism can be instrumentalised to serve foreign policy, “instrumentalising nationalism” does not always require government’s actions or reflect to government’s intention. In other words, as will be demonstrated in latter case-study chapters, nationalism arguably does not always follow government’s guidance, nationalist sentiment can both improve and hinder foreign policy decision-making positions. The term “instrumentalisation” is used throughout to highlight the role nationalism plays in foreign policy under the Constructivist microscope.<sup>32</sup>

Explaining the foreign policy behaviour of states has proved a particularly difficult task for theorists of international relations (Smith, 1986). For centuries it relied on an analogy between states and individuals in the state of nature, so that an endemic tendency to international anarchy resulted from states having 'interests'; systemic, determinist theories could therefore explain foreign policy by appealing to such notions as national interest and power maximization. In mainstream IR theories such

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<sup>32</sup> A fuller treatment of Constructivist view on nationalism is presented in respect of Chinese nationalism, in next chapter.

as Realism and Liberalism, foreign policy is analysed through a positivist/rationalist approach,<sup>33</sup> whereby elements such as identity are considered external and prior to the process of international politics, only material capabilities are measured significantly. Ideational factors are seen as ‘taken’ or ‘given’ in international relations. Mainstream Constructivist approaches build a bridge between “realist-liberal traditions and rationalist-reflectivist debates” (Wendt, 1992: 384). The benefits of doing this in this work, is that it links well the two principal subjects of the study; namely, foreign policy (a rationalist concept) with nationalism (a socio-ideational factor). In turns, it constructs a solid theoretical framework that centres on this critical paradigm.

**Paradigm:** nationalism has a “double-edged sword” effect on both Beijing’s domestic and foreign policy, especially in the post-Cold War, post-Tiananmen era.

**Assumption:** Nationalism and domestic politics thus are mutually constitutive to foreign policy.

## 1.4 Interpretive Methods

Having established a set of Constructivist theoretical assumptions to approach this piece of research, it is time to answer the second question of methodology—how do we go about it? Analysing contemporary foreign policy, and contentious issues such as popular nationalism, faces a major challenge. Without access to official policy documents and inner circles of the decision making body, one simply cannot directly gauge the intentions and motives for a certain policy decision. Therefore, one needs a

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<sup>33</sup> It is worth noting that rationalist-reflectivist debate is sometimes termed as positivist-interpretive, respectively. See for example Keohane (1988), in which rationalist, and reflectivist are used; and Neufeld (1993), in which positivist, and interpretive are used. This thesis sees both sets of terms are interchangeable, although positivist-interpretive is preferred.



method that can be used to work backwardly. In other words, taking policy outcomes as the analytical point of departure, assessing relevant circumstantial evidence, to interpret the policy intentions, and identify determinants. Interpretive approach is the best methods to adopt in this type of research.

This section argues that, due to the mutually constitutive relations existing among nationalism, foreign and domestic policy, traditional positivist approaches to analysis possess too narrow a concept of reasoning, which do not fully explore socio-ideational factors. They are also intangible in practice, due to the reasons listed above. Hence, a broader understanding of how foreign policy decisions are taken is needed. The objective of this section is to address two important sets of questions. First, what is it about an interpretive approach that distinguishes it from the traditional, positivist one? Specifically, on what points does an interpretive methodology differ from a positivist one? Second, and most critically, how may an interpretive methodology contribute to this particular research project that is supplementary to a positivist approach?

Mark Neufeld has pointed out “one of the best ways to distinguish positivist social science from interpretive social science is in terms of their respective conceptualizations of human consciousness” (1993: 40). One of the most fundamental distinctions between positivist and interpretive methods is their respective treatment toward the “social world”. Positivistically-minded social scientists, resting on the assumptions of “naturalism” (Neufeld, 1993: 40), see no difference between the natural world and the social world, where they both contain the same kind of regularities independent of time and place. Put simply, positivists treat human

consciousness and social actions as they would do in natural sciences—seeking hard facts through hard evidences. As a result, positivist theory holds that the social world should be observed in the same way as in the natural world. In other words, the knowledge of the social world must be based on empirical evidence only. Whilst positivists do not deny the existence of intersubjective meanings or shared knowledge that individuals attach to their behaviour, they nonetheless do not consider them to be sufficient for the validation of scientific knowledge about the social world, as they are conceived to be publically observable objects or events (Neufeld, 1993: 41-43). In essence, this leads positivists to seek “hard evidence” to explain social actions, and more often than not they rely on materialistically measurable factors, such as the economy, military, and geography. This however, is not possible dealing with an ideational determinant such as nationalism.

Although interpretive theorists do not contest the fact that individuals attach “subjective meanings” to their behaviour, what they do contest is that the regularities of human behaviour which can be observed in the social world “exist independently of time and place as they do in the natural world” (Neufeld, 1993: 43). Adherent to a mainstream Constructivist approach, interpretive theorists understand that human beings are constantly self-interpreting and self-defining.<sup>34</sup> Human beings live in a world of cultural meanings, which in their own have its source of interpretations of that world (Neufeld, 1993: 43). In other words, like Constructivists, interpretive methods also pay strong attention to the importance of cultural meanings, or shared knowledge on their own, not merely being taken as ‘given’ explanatory factors. What distinguishes interpretive methods in social science from interpretation of the natural

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<sup>34</sup> See Giddens (1984).

world is that part of the subject matter of social science is itself an interpretation that is constructed by and re-constructs social structures.

The main difficulty for positivists in coping with ideational features that have intersubjective meanings is that positivist theories are rather rigid, only seeing these elements as “intervening variables” in a causal sequence, whereas interpretive theories benefit from accepting a more dynamic mutually constitutive relationship between social practices, including foreign policy, and ideational meanings (such as nationalism) that constitute them. Hence, it promotes deeper understandings of these intersubjective meanings. As Charles Taylor notes:

Intersubjective meanings, ways of experiencing in society which are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices, do not fit into the categorical grid of mainstream political science. This allows only for an intersubjective reality that is brute-data-identifiable. But social practices and institutions that are partly constituted by certain ways of talking about them are not so identifiable. We have to understand the language, the underlying meanings, that constitute them (Taylor, 1987: 59).

In short, FPA presents a framework under which the dynamism of the foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) can be analysed. Constructivism then offers the link between policy-orientated actions and ideational determinants such as nationalism. the interpretive methodology finally gives researchers the tool to analyse this intersubjective process (i.e. FPDM) involving historically-shaped values and habits of

thought as well as emotionally and instrumentally generated criteria (such as popular nationalism).<sup>35</sup>

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

Having established the theoretical framework, the research was conducted under a set of methodology to empirically analyse the mutually constitutive relations between popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics.

In order to fully investigate popular nationalism's impact on China's foreign policy, Japan has been chosen as an empirical subject for this study. There are three reasons for making this choice. Firstly, as the following two chapters will explain, Japan, perhaps more than any other state, has received more than its share of nationalist outcry from the Chinese public, partly due to the antagonism endured between the two countries for a long period in China's contemporary history; and partly as a result of the Communist government tapping into this anti-Japanese sentiment in its constriction of popular nationalism in the 1990s. Secondly, not only does relationship between China and Japan exhibit high emotional value, it also nonetheless, carries tangible yet sensitive issues such as the unsolved territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Therefore, as witnessed by both countries, anti-Japanese sentiment has been a predominant element in Chinese popular nationalism in the past 20 years.<sup>36</sup> Finally, despite vast volume of academic studies on various aspects of Sino-Japanese relations, shown in Chapter Three, this research believes due to the

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<sup>35</sup> See Finlayson (2007) for the support of using interpretive methodology in rhetorical political analysis.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter Three for more discussions on anti-Japanese sentiment in Chinese popular nationalism.

fluid, fluctuate nature of the bilateral relations, and that of Chinese popular nationalism, it is necessary to offer an up-to-date and more comprehensive study on particularly the dynamics of popular nationalism in China's Japan policy and its domestic politics.

The contemporary time frame of this study and the secretive nature surrounding foreign policy in general, and the Chinese government, in particular, make it impossible to gain a direct access of the inner workings of China's foreign policy decision-making. To overcome this problem, the research adopts the aforementioned interpretive methods by carefully examining mainly reports by both Chinese and Western media, government officials' remarks, and messages and blogs in online public forums in China.

For the two chosen case studies, namely the 2005 anti-Japanese demonstration and 2010 boat collision incident near the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, more than 350 pieces information were examined, including foreign ministry spokesperson's remarks, media reports and online posts in popular social networking sites. Because of state's tight control over the media, news reports in China provide valuable information for events in foreign affairs of which the official decision-making process is not publicly accessible.<sup>37</sup> Coverage from official media outlets, such as *People's Daily*, *China Daily* and *China Central Television (CCTV)*, usually offer reasonably good reflections on government's stance on a particular internal and external issue. In each case study, media coverage following the chronological developments of the event was used as primary sources to form a central 'line-of-pursuit' around which

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<sup>37</sup> For a good up-to-date study on media in China, see Shirk (2011a).

analyses were constructed. In order to avoid being overly reliant on one particular perspective, the research was conducted bilingually consulting English-based reports as well as Chinese ones, producing a balanced narrative to the events. Moreover, extensive studies on relevant academic literature were conducted, aiming at providing supplementary sources to enhance the general understandings of Chinese popular nationalism and Sino-Japanese relations. In addition, where possible, references were also made to existing scholarly contributions to the specific cases under study in Chapter Four and Five.

In addition, the rapid rise in internet usage in China in recent years has given the Chinese public a good platform to get involve in current affair at a level that has never been seen before. As the two case studies will elaborate, thanks to the internet, Chinese public nowadays not only can spread and follow the development of a particular event, more critically, internet users may also share opinion, including nationalistic sentiment through this virtual channel. By combining media coverage on the two chosen events, with public reactions both online and on the ground (reported public protests), the research was able to able present and more importantly, analyse the dynamics between public opinion, foreign policy and concerns for domestic politics.

Supplementary to these materials, nine prominent Chinese scholars in the fields of IR, Sino-Japanese relations were also interviewed for this research project, during the on-the-ground work in China carried out between July and August 2009. These academics were selected by their high levels of expertise in their respective field, and availability. Although financial and time restrictions had somehow limited the scope

of the field research for this project, hence narrowing the access to potential interviewees, it is worth stressing that the role of the several elite academics that were interviewed, afford them a significant position in terms of their own insights into, and possible influence on, China's foreign policy making. Thus, albeit with limited numbers, the use of these interviews makes a rich source of information that is not normally obtainable through written materials.

## **1.6 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the theoretical and methodological framework within which the subsequent cases can be studied. The chapter started by discussing the two concepts evident in the title of this work, namely nationalism and foreign policy. Rather, nationalism is taken here as a dynamic socio-ideational concept that characterises a nation's identity. As stated, nationalism is viewed here as a set of dynamic determinants, instruments, and constraints within both domestic and foreign policy. It is thus, this thesis argues, more important for the rationale of the research to understand nationalism as a social concept that itself is mutually constructed by its own society and that of the world. The discussion then moves to foreign policy, and in particular the framework for analysing foreign policy—Foreign Policy Analysis. FPA provides valuable tools which enable researchers to open-up the “black-box” of the state and foreign policy often recognised in IR. Moreover, debates on FPA have also discovered similarities in theoretical standings shared between itself and Constructivism, and therefore the choice for a mainstream Constructivist approach can be justified.

Adopting mainstream Constructivist assumptions and interpretive methods allow foreign policy and domestic politics to be mutually connected with ideational factors such as nationalism, culture and history. Hence the interactions among the three elements (nationalism, domestic politics and foreign policy) can be fully explored.

In next chapter, the work departs from general theoretical concepts to the core subject of this research project, China. The chapter will assess how Chinese nationalism evolved against the backdrop of dramatic external and internal changes. In particular, the chapter will study the transformation from state-led nationalism to popular nationalism in the late 1980s. In addition, it will also examine the importance of pride/humiliation complex in shaping Chinese popular nationalism in the post-Cold War era.



## **Chapter Two: Chinese Nationalism – from Elites to Grassroots**

The main aim of this chapter is to provide a concise overview on Chinese nationalism and foreign policy. The purpose of doing this is threefold. First, by exploring the origins of Chinese nationalism and especially the historical background against which nationalism was evolved is imperative for understanding one of the most distinctive characteristics of Chinese nationalism today, namely the pride/humiliation complex.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, sudden changes in international political landscape at end of the Cold War and the subsequent state-led Patriotic Education Campaign (PEC) in the 1990s marks another important transition in Chinese nationalism, when the principal force of nationalism transferred from elite reformists of the late Qing Dynasty to grassroots citizens of the twenty-first century. Finally, this mixture of pride and humiliation is also a significant feature in China's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, as China's national security is closely tied with nationalist insecurities. The pride/humiliation narratives have been evidently reflected in Beijing's practice in foreign affairs.

The chapter begins by looking at the birth of Chinese nationalism on the eve of the establishment of China's first proper nation-state. It then fast-forwards to assess the impacts of China's reform policy and the post-Cold War transformations on the development of popular nationalism. The central argument on the evolution of Chinese nationalism is that the end of the Cold War and the rise of the internet have gradually shifted the dominant source of Chinese nationalism today from state/elite

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<sup>38</sup> This term is created from the argument of Callahan (2010).

level to the grassroots level. The last part of this chapter discusses the pride/humiliation complex that is at the core of Chinese nationalism in the post-Cold War era. This thesis argues that it is this double-faced nature that has made Chinese nationalism such a dynamic force in both domestic and foreign policy today.

## **2.1 Origins of Chinese Nationalism**

Despite Chinese civilizations thousands of years of history, Chinese nationalism did not come to light until the later nineteenth, early twentieth centuries. Before the turn of the twentieth century, China was a dynastical empire, not a nation-state, as we know it. The dominant concept in politics and national identity was a Confucian cultural system based on teachings of Confucius. The political legitimacy for the Emperor came from the “Mandate of the Heaven” (天意). The Emperor, known as the Son of the Heaven or 天子, ruled by his cultural supremacy and virtue. Moreover, Chinese emperors believed all land under heaven was universal (天下大同) based on Chinese culture (Zhao, 2004a: 41). Traditional Chinese thinking was lacking in “the concept of the nation (国家概念). People loved to talk about the land under the heaven (天下), showing...the development of China in history was a universe not a nation” (Duara, 1996: 31-55). Harrison used the term “culturalism” to describe imperial China’s national identity. Harrison also observed that the traditional Chinese self-image of culturalism is based on “a common historical heritage and acceptance of shared beliefs, not as nationalism, based on modern concept of nation-state” (cited in Townsend, 1992: 98). Chinese culturalism emphasised “self-image”, which perceived China as the only true civilization, and its cultural superiority was unchallenged. The Imperial Chinese believed that foreign peoples might be military threats but could

never challenge China because of their cultural backwardness and could never rule China unless in a Chinese way. Townsend notes that Chinese nationalism was evolved from traditional culturalism at the turn of the twentieth century, when Western Imperialists overpowered China weak infrastructure along with its sense of universalism and cultural superiority. For the first time the Chinese people had realised that the capability of Western military powers was able to undermine Chinese cultural superiority. Culturalism thus, explains not only the Chinese empire's capacity to survive for so long, but also why it fell when a truly competitive foreign culture penetrated China. As Townsend notes:

Foreign imperialism did not have to conquer the empire to destroy it. It had only to demonstrate that its formidable military power carried an explicit challenge to the Chinese view of the world by agents who assumed their own cultural superiority. With culturally-based confidence and identity in doubt from setbacks administered by these avowed challengers, and lacking a nationalist base to fall back on, imperial China disintegrated (Townsend, 1992: 99).

In the wake of defeats, Chinese elite intellectuals who had good understanding on the political systems of the West began to realise that traditional culturalism, centred on cultural superiority and Confucian teachings, was no match for big guns on foreign ships. What China desperately needed was an ideology which could unite the whole Chinese nation as single political entity. Liang Qichao<sup>39</sup> and Kang Youwei among others desired a strong central government, which could unite and lead the whole

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<sup>39</sup> Liang Qichao, who was highly interested in Western political philosophy, is recognised as the pioneer of Chinese nationalism. He is attributed as the person who led waves of nationalist movement against old traditionalists in the Qing government. Inspired by Liang, in the period between 1842 and 1911, several nationalist movements had taken place. E.g. the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1894), anti-Japanese demonstrations after Chinese defeat in First Sino-Japanese War (1895-1896), the Hundred Day Reform (1898), the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), and the 1911 Revolution that overthrown the Imperial Qing Dynasty, led by Sun Yat-sen, another prominent nationalist figure. See Levenson (1953).

population as an entity and resist foreign imperial powers. The Manchu Qing government, Liang believed, was too weak and corrupted to carry out such a task. This defeat and a series of subsequent defeats “paved the way for the eventual disintegration of imperial China and let Chinese elite to reject the old culturalism and borrow the Europe concept of nationalism that would provide a new basis for the China’s defence and regeneration.” (Zhao, 2000: 4)

Liang Qichao supported “a broad nationalism” which called for “the uniting of all the nationalities” in China to deal with the foreign aggressions (Chen, 2005: 39). Having witnessed the turbulent years of foreign invasion and colonisation of parts of China and a weak, highly corrupt and helpless Qing government in its last days, Liang was convinced that “what we Chinese lack most and need most today is an organic integration and forced order.” And he believed, to achieve this, “Han, Manchus, Mongols, Hui, Miao and Tibetan [different ethnic nations] should unite as a broad nation” (Liang, 1989: 76). Liang’s nationalism was directed against foreign imperial powers that had a foothold in China. His idea on nation-building was based on bounding all ethnic nations into a unified state to resist foreign intruders.

Sun Yat-sen, known as the ‘founding father of modern of China’ (国父), also adopted a concept of nationalism to save China. Theoretically, Sun provided a workable framework to which development of the nation-state could be followed. He is most famous for setting the Three Principles of the People – Nationalism; Democracy; and People’s Livelihood (民族, 民主, 民生) – developed before the 1911 Revolution. This set of principles became the fundamental ideology of the Kuomintang (KMT) and is still praised by many Chinese worldwide, especially amongst people in Taiwan.

Nationalism, according to Sun, was “the treasure for a state to prosper and for a nation to survive” (Sun, 1997: 86). He concluded that his own Principle of Nationalism was equivalent to the “doctrine of state.” Nationalism for Sun was “a kind of thought, a kind of faith, and a kind of power” (Sun cited in Hughes, 2005: 120-121).

In short, the period of Western occupation, unequal treaties, and enforced foreign extraterritorial jurisdiction (治外法权) in China served as a wakeup call for several Chinese elites. They felt the old system of beliefs based on Confucianism was no longer adequate to defend China in the face of foreign invasion. Learning from the Western concept of nation and national identity, reformist intellectuals such as Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen used the notion of defending own nation against Western intruders to establish a new form of national identity. In other words, rather than holding onto the old cultural based national identity focusing on China—us, Chinese nationalism was defined through the advancing Western imperialist power—other. Thus, it is reasonable to affirm that the catalyst for the birth of Chinese nationalism is foreign power. The so-called “century of shame and humiliation” (百年耻辱) provided the suitable environment, from which Chinese nationalism had evolved. As Chapter Three will show, this practice of using the ‘other’ to define ‘us’ is still very much valid in today’s Chinese nationalism, especially on the issues with Japan.

## **2.2 State-led Nationalism and the Communist Party**

Since 1949, the founding year the People’s Republic of China (PRC), state nationalism has dominated official doctrine, placing its mark on most government statements and policies, especially on its foreign policy. In the early years of the PRC, due to the prolonged period of war, the newly-born republic seemed very unsure

about its place in the world. Early communist leaders in China strictly followed the politics of Marxism-Leninism and socialist ideology, so was Chinese nationalism. Being highly distrust and disapproval of Western Capitalist society, Mao Zedong made his case for Chinese nationalism in a much wider context of the struggle for Communism in socialist states across the globe. Chen argues that during this period, Chinese nationalism was confined within the context of communist internationalism. He continues this argument by presenting Mao's way of addressing this problematic relationship between Chinese nationalism and communist internationalism:

Chinese Communists must therefore combine patriotism with internationalism. We are at once internationalists and patriots . . . Only by achieving national liberation will it be possible for the proletariat and other working people to achieve their own emancipation. The victory of China and the defeat of the invading imperialists will help the people of other countries. Thus in wars of national liberation, patriotism is applied in internationalism (Mao cited in Chen, 2005: 41).

China's national identity construction before Deng Xiaoping's reform seemed strongly influenced by the ideological confrontation between communism and capitalism. There are two reasons that can support this statement. First, a tangible and intense ideological confrontation between communism and capitalism took place in the Cold War, which broke soon after the founding of the Communist China in 1949. China being an important member of the Communist bloc, the government had to stand along side with the Soviet Union and other Communist states.<sup>40</sup> More importantly perhaps, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) rule was built on the

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<sup>40</sup> Mao Zedong made his position clearly. He wrote that China must ally itself "with the Soviet Union, with every New Democratic country, and with the proletariat and broad masses in all other countries." Hence he announced that Chinese foreign policy would "lean towards one side [the Soviet Union]" in the struggle between imperialism and socialism. See Mao (1965: 415).

foundation of its victory over foreign, Western Capitalist powers that had occupied China during the ‘century of shame and humiliation’. Therefore, upon establishing the PRC, the ruling CCP was able to construct a set of contrasting images between the triumph of independence and China under foreign invasion and occupation. As a result, a general sense of distrust and hatred toward the Western world was stimulated amongst Chinese public. One way to boost CCP’s political legitimacy and consolidate its fragile political power was to emphasise its efforts in defeating imperialist powers (including Japan) that had occupied various parts of China for 14 years between 1931 and 1945. Initially, having fought victory against the KMT, the CCP diminished the KMT’s achievement in the war against Japan. The KMT was portrayed as a rather weak government who did not stand squarely to fight the Japanese. For instance, for many years the KMT had been labelled as “KMT Reactionaries” (国民党反动派). It is not until recent years, as cross-strait relations with Taiwan gradually improved, the accomplishment by the KMT regular armies in frontline battles against the Japanese was reassessed. Their bravery actions and enormous sacrifices have recently been recognised and appraised in the CCP-directed media and history education.<sup>41</sup>

Prior to the 1990s, the CCP government led a form of nationalism fuelled by this strong sense of anti-imperialist nationalism. Anti-imperialist nationalism asserted that China’s decline in the second half of the nineteenth century was primarily due to foreign imperialist aggression. It recalled indigenous Confucian virtue and ideas which national salvation could be relied on. Zhao Suisheng describes this anti-imperialist nationalism as nativism, which recognises that the “impact of imperialism

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<sup>41</sup> The Battle of Tai’erzhauang is a good example to illustrate this. The battle was an extremely hard-fought victory for the KMT army. This achievement however had been neglected by the CCP in China. It was not until the early 2000s, more balanced assessment on KMT’s attitude in the war was made, with films and documentaries about the battle broadcasted to Chinese public.

on Chinese self-esteem and the subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues are the root of China's weakness" (2000: 5). Nativism identified imperialism as the enemy and stressed national independence through self-strengthening to achieve self-reliance and self-help. Mao's principle of 自力更生 (self-reliance and regeneration through one's own efforts) can be seen as a fitting example. Moreover, Goldstein notes that the CCP leadership convinced the general public that "China could only become a truly independent, sovereign nation if it relied on its own resources and purged the nation of these foreign intellectual and political influences." He went on to argue this principle of self-reliance and self-help all seemed "appropriate to a nation that had for more than a century, been the victim of a predatory international system" (Goldstein, 1994: 228-229). Mao's decision to be involved in the Korea War demonstrated how nativist nationalism indeed influenced China's foreign policy. In order to generate public support for sending the "volunteer army" to Korea, the CCP launched a fierce campaign against the so-called "American Imperialism". The slogan of 抗美援朝保家卫国 (resist American aggression, aid Korea, save our homes and protect our country) founded a popular rationale for China's involvement in the war. Mao believed that the only way for the newly founded People's Republic to survive was to preserve China unique national identity and purge Western imperialism. The Western world was therefore perceived as a great threat and the most dangerous enemy to the building of a "socialist new China" (Kirby, 1995: 13-14).

Lucian Pye concurs with the argument that a unique semi-colonial experience contributes to this xenophobic attribute in Chinese nationalism. A different level of local anti-Western hostility appears to show when Pye compares Chinese nativist nationalism to that in other ex-colonised states. Although the CCP's promotion of the



‘weak old China, strong new China’ contrast may offer one explanation, Pye does not believe it is the only reason. Instead, Pye highlights that partial colonisation in China was achieved under a unique “Treaty Port” system, whereby imperialists were only interested in controlling the commercial activities by colonising parts of major coastal cities, such as Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and big cities like Wuhan, Nanking, along the Yangtze River,<sup>42</sup> but not the whole country (1993: 113). These colonised sections were given the name of Concessions, in which foreign powers usually ran their own administration. In contrast, most other states in Asia and Africa became colonies when entire states were occupied and ruled by the Western imperialists. In effect, the native people in these colonies engaged in frequent and direct personal contact with the colonisers. After many years of direct administration of the Indian subcontinent by the British Raj, “Indians, for example, knew what Englishmen were like and therefore colonialism was not like an abstraction” (Pye, 1993: 113). Whereas, Pye believes Chinese people generally had less direct contact with the imperialist than people in fully-colonised states, and therefore “for them the threat of foreign penetration and the evils of ‘unequal treaties’ were abstract. The psychology was thus totally different” (1993: 113).

Comparing to nationalism in other states, this state-led nativist nationalism gives a strong xenophobic impression. As presented in previous paragraphs, Chinese nationalism does have a close attachment with China’s past history. As a result, when China finally achieved national liberation and independence and was freed from foreign occupations, the CCP was able to convey a strong popular nationalist belief among Chinese people, centred at preserving this freedom and avoiding reliving in the

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<sup>42</sup> This is the reason why Chinese government often refers to this period (1840-1949) as semi-feudal, semi-colonised.

past shame and humiliation. Words with strong emotional connotation have also been frequently used in diplomatic exchanges ever since the birth of the PRC, reflecting the CCP's conceptualisation of nationalism. '[Foreign government's action] has severely hurt the feelings of the Chinese people' (严重伤害了中国人民的感情) is a tagline often used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in diplomatic protests, most notably towards Japan. With added nationalistic sentiment, it is arguable that these emotional referents, such as 'the Chinese people', 'feelings' and 'humiliation' transcend more impersonal terms such as 'China' and 'protests', in official diplomatic messages (Whiting, 1983: 195).

As China entering into a new era of "reform and open" (改革开放) policy in late 1970s, there appeared to be a distinct change in characteristics of nationalism (Whiting, 1983: 914; Zhao, 2000: 9-10). The emphasis of nationalism shifted from classic Communist ideology—Marxism-Leninism to one that focused on national interests. New generations of Chinese leaders have adopted a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy. As much desire to restore China to its rightful place as before, Deng Xiaoping would no longer focus on the 'century of shame and humiliation' nationalist rhetoric to bind Chinese public. Instead, Deng stressed on economic development and poverty alleviation. Nationalism in Deng's era, still placed 'us, the Chinese people' in positive terms, but it assigned less negative connotations to 'others, foreign nations'. This pragmatic approach to nationalism saw "foreign exploitation, and cultural infiltration as a source of China's weakness, but believes that the lack of modernisation is the reason why China became an easy target for Western imperialism" (Zhao, 2000: 9). Deng Xiaoping was convinced that in order to survive and prosper in modern world, China could no longer isolate itself

from the outside world, as it did during the Cultural Revolution. Chinese people's desire to restore their country to the glorious past can only be achieved by actively engaging with other states. To achieve this, Deng was willing to adopt whatever economic approach that might make China strong, hence moving away from the orthodox teachings of Communism that had been the guiding principle for the CCP for many years before Deng. One of Deng's most famous quotes epitomises this belief: "it does not matter if it is a black or white cat, as long as it can catch rats, it is a good cat" (Zhao, 2000: 9).

Deng's economic reform and open door policy focused on economic development and international trade. At the same time, Deng had confronted with some opposition and scepticism, mainly from conservative traditionalists within the CCP.<sup>43</sup> They feared that increasing political and economic contacts with the rest of the world would inevitably make China more interdependent with outside world. This might be able to eliminate external military attack, but it risked "undermining the cultural identity it was meant to uphold" (Yahuda, 1997: 8). Hence, nationalism in Deng's era might have lost some of its cultural and historic orientation. Nationalism during the early years of economic reform appeared to be much more affirmative, more positive, which centred on achieving economic prosperity as a nation. "Transform China into a modernised, prosperous and strong state" had become the nationalistic theme binding the nation together. Oksenberg terms this positive Chinese nationalism in Deng's era as 'confident nationalism'. He notes:

"[Confident nationalism] is a patient and moderate nationalism rooted in confidence

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<sup>43</sup> Mainly constitutes the old generation of high-profile CCP members and the "leftist" ideological faction and components of the People's Liberation Army. See Whiting (1995: 306-315).

that over time China can regain its former greatness through economic growth, based on the import of foreign technology and ideas. It is a calculated nationalism, linked to a strategy for economic and political development. It is also a determined and resolute nationalism, flexible in tactics, subtle in strategy” (1986/7: 505).

Since the open door reform, Beijing had been generally pragmatic in its relations with other states. Particularly in Northeast Asia, Beijing had played an active, and in some cases a leading role in regional security issues. Nevertheless, nationalistic sentiment had remained strong among the policy-makers and the public when confronting with Beijing’s core national interests, namely the upholding of sovereignty and territorial integrity. For example, Deng held a firm stance when negotiating with British Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher on regaining authority over Hong Kong. He firmly declared, “[o]n the question of sovereignty, China has no room for manoeuvre. To be frank, the question is not open to discussion” (Deng, 1982). Furthermore, since the end of the Cold War, the Communist central government has continuously warned Chinese public about the West, especially the American government,<sup>44</sup> vigorous attempts of alleged “peaceful evolution” on China (Whiting, 1995: 298-300). State media repeatedly underlined the danger of “peaceful evolution” and calling for “vigilance against the imperialist armed aggression and ‘peaceful evolution’ conspiracy at any time” (Niu and Zhang cited in Whiting, 1995: 300).

## **2.3 The Rise of Popular Nationalism after 1989**

Given the difficult period of history that China experienced in the hands of foreign occupiers and the Communist Party’s difficult route to power, it is perhaps not hard to

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<sup>44</sup> For China’s threat perception against the United States, see Glaser (1993: 259-261); and Wang and Lin (1992).

understand that national self-assertion has served as a core value of Chinese political elites ever since Mao's declaration that "China has stood up" in 1949. From the birth of the People's Republic, China has continuously asserted itself in international society as a self-styled "leader" of the Third World. As Phil Deans notes:

the Chinese leadership routinely criticises the liberal assumptions underpinning the ideology of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund...[and] the international human rights regime. (Deans, 2004: 10)

However, with its opening-up and reform policy, and the rapid development in Internet technology in Mainland China, the Chinese public has had, more than ever, opportunities to exchange information with the rest of the world. The events took place in the Communist bloc towards the end of the Cold War, and the Tiananmen Square crackdown in particular, not only brought new challenges for the CCP leadership, but arguably, it also marked a gradual transformation in Chinese nationalism. Many China specialists have commented on the apparent rise in nationalism in Chinese society since the end of the Cold War (Zheng, 1999; Gries, 2004; Hughes, 2006; Zhao, 1998; 2000; 2004a; 2004b and 2005). Most writers of Chinese nationalism in the West attribute this rise nationalism to the result of the government's patriotic education campaigns<sup>45</sup> and the dramatic changes in global political landscape after the Cold War (Gries, 2004; Zhao; 2004a; and Hughes, 2006). Specifically, many observers of Chinese nationalism believe that the end of Cold War had weakened the value of traditional Communist ideology in China's domestic politics and dislodged it from the pinnacle position in the ruling CCP's political

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<sup>45</sup> The nation wide patriotic education in the 1990s was initiated when the CCP Central Committee issued a directive setting out an outline for implementation to relevant local authorities in August 1994. See CCP Central Committee (1994). The author, as a primary school student in China at the time, had first hand experience of the patriotic education.

legitimacy. As a result, the CCP had found nationalism as the new foundation on which the CCP might continue to govern. The main effect of this state-led patriotic education campaign is that it reinforced the Communist Party firmly as the power source for the state. In other words, according to Beijing's concept, the love of the state, or patriotism, cannot be separated from the love of the CCP. As Zhao puts it perfectly, "the best way to love and defend the Chinese nation was to love and defend the state under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (2004a: 239). Whilst not discrediting the effects of state-led promotion in nationalism, the following section will argue that Chinese nationalism after 1989 has gradually transferred from state-led top-down elite nationalism to grassroots bottom-up popular nationalism.

### **2.3.1 "Culture Fever" and Popular Nationalist Critique**

During the early years of economic reform, China was at a crossroads. Chinese intellectuals were debating the direction in which China should be heading, pitting the discourse of orthodoxy against reform and centralisation against decentralisation. As identified by Fewsmith, "[t]his was a question both of political legitimacy—was the Chinese revolution wrong from the very start?—as well as of Chinese identity: did modernisation mean Westernisation?" (2008: 148). In the 1980s, thanks to Deng's reform and opening-up policy, Chinese intellectuals, who had been isolated for so long during the Cultural Revolution, were for the first time able to see the so-called outside world. Not only did they enjoy wearing flared jeans and miniskirts, and dancing in newly opened discos to Hong Kong pop music, the post-Cultural Revolution youths were also eager to learn Western ideas. Suddenly, thanks to this huge influx of information and new things from the West, Western life styles became a trendy way of life, especially amongst the well-educated youths, such as college

and university graduates. In response to this pursue of Western capitalist culture, a handful of young intellectuals began to worry this trend of modernisation, as they felt it neglect Chinese traditional cultural and values. They, just like the elite intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, started to write articles warning fellow citizens of the potential risk for following this trend. For example, Wang Xiaodong, one of the most vocal advocates for Chinese popular nationalism, found himself deeply opposed to this cultural cosmopolitanism expressed during the blossoming of ‘cultural fever’, when he returned from his overseas study. Over the years, he has strongly criticised this 1980s attitude, terming it China’s ‘reverse racism’ (逆向种族主义),<sup>46</sup> whereby people are critical of their own traditional culture and value for the sake of pursuing Western way of life (Wang, 1999a: 81-106; and 2009b: 218).<sup>47</sup> He Xin, reflecting on the decade of reform prior to the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, criticises this period of an apparent flourishing of culture, expressing his dismay at the decline of ideology, national spirit, values, state consciousness, and social order (1996: 401-413). Moreover, Wang goes further to reveal that the government’s encouragement of cultural diversity and its own reflection of the Cultural Revolution did help ‘reverse racism’, to flourish in the late 1980s. Along with the influx of products, music, and lifestyle from the West, the CCP had also actively encouraged the public to read newly-translated Western literature, and newly-imported films. He asserts that this state-led promotion has rarely been mentioned in the West, in contrast to discussions about official campaign for nationalism in the 1990s (2009b: 217-219). The reasons for this, he explains, was because the West simply could not imagine how the Chinese government could possibly praise Western ideology (Wang, 2009b: 218).

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<sup>46</sup> For a most recent critique on ‘reverse racism’, see Wang (2009a: 206-212).

<sup>47</sup> A common expression in Chinese best encapsulates this so-called ‘reverse racism’ goes 外国的月亮总比中国的圆, which literally means “the Moon in foreign countries are always rounder than the one in China”. It is the Chinese equivalent of “grass is always greener on the other side”.

By way of example, a television documentary series, *河殇* (*He Shang* or *River Elegy*),<sup>48</sup> heavily criticised by Wang and other popular nationalists, set as a proof of this government's sponsoring of 'reverse racism'. The series was first broadcast in 1988 on the state-run *China Central Television* (CCTV) and subsequently endorsed by CCP's official newspaper, the *People's Daily*. Moreover, during the period of broadcast, the government at various levels organised talks and discussion forums on *He Shang*. Many newspapers even published the scripts of the documentary, whilst being shown on the television (Wang, 2009b: 218).

The series took its name from the Yellow River, the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and a potent symbol of China. It portrayed the Yellow River and the old '黄土文明' (yellow-soil civilisation) as essentially violent, erratic and stagnant, in need of revival. It announced the "death" of Chinese traditional culture, hence the word 殇 (elegy) in its title. As well as criticising the traditional culture, it suggested that China should transform itself by accepting influences from the West, and it hoped that traditional values and culture would be replaced by Western culture. At the end the series, by using the analogy that the Yellow River eventually flows into the Pacific Ocean, the film dared to envisage democracy as the inevitable and unalterable end of China's transformation to replace authoritarian dictatorship (Su and Wang, 1988).

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<sup>48</sup> The scripts of the TV series was based on a book by the same name, see Su and Wang (1988). An E-book version can be viewed at <http://www.northbeauty.org/bencandy.php?fid=5&aid=373&page=1>, accessed on 01/11/2010. The subsequent descriptions of *He Shang* are mainly drawn from this book.



Initially, *He Shang* gained great popularity and was praised by the government, especially by the reform-minded Premier Zhao Ziyang (Kristof, 1989). It nevertheless, aroused a storm of criticism from the likes of Wang Xiaodong and He Xin, leading figures of China's new popular nationalists. He Xin (1989) believes that the "complete Westernisation" promoted in *He Shang* would lead to a "new dogmatism" of worshipping Western values, which would represent a very bad development for China. The Tiananmen crackdown, he argues, was a result of such a trend. As stability was restored after the Tiananmen crackdown, He Xin claims, people came to realise that modelling themselves on the West could not solve China's problems (He, 1989). In contrast, Wang's disapproval of *He Shang* came from another perspective. What really bothered Wang were the authors of the series, whom Wang perceived as cultural elites in China. Wang understood the aforementioned important role of elites in formulating Chinese nationalism. He was disappointed about the 'reverse racism' shown by the authors (cultural elites), when they identified themselves with the West and denigrated the Chinese people on the basis of Western standards. As Wang puts it, the authors "ridiculed the Chinese peasants' dull-witted love of the yellow soil and praised highly the courage and insight of Westerners in throwing themselves into myriad difficulties" (Wang and Qiu, 1988: 4). Coincidentally, both He and Wang conclude their criticisms by declaring that China needed nationalism (not 'reverse racism'), formed by promoting China's own values and culture, and relating to its own history, in order to maintain social stability and political authority (Fewsmith, 2008: 206-209).

Wang, He and few others, were the key advocates of Chinese popular nationalism in the 1980s. They had set the stage for others to follow in the early 1990s, by injecting

vital energy for popular nationalism to prosper. In late 1993, a new journal called *Strategy and Management* (《战略与管理》) started publication and quickly became a forum for new and often critical ideas (Fewsmith, 2008: 157). It frequently featured nationalism in its articles, as a time when nationalism as a sensitive concept had not yet been openly debated in the academic circle.<sup>49</sup> The general tone of the journal was frank and outspoken, sometime even critical of the government. As the institution that published *Strategy and Management* was well connected with the government, especially the military, their critical style could be maintained.<sup>50</sup> Since its establishment, *Strategy and Management* had been a popular platform on which popular nationalists, such as Wang Xiaodong, and academics could exchange their ideas on nationalism and how to promote it (Wang, 1999b; and 2000). The significance of *Strategy and Management* is that not only did it provide a space for popular nationalists to share their ideas with the intellectuals who are connected to the apparatus of the government, but it also created a fashionable trend amongst the academic community for the nationalism debate to thrive. This timely debate together with the argument put forwarded earlier by Wang and He in the late 1980s was supported by Beijing in the 1990s, as the government made a great effort to promote an official discourse of nationalism. In the wake of Tiananmen crackdown in June 1989, Beijing made a U-turn on its position regarding the 1980s ‘cultural fever’, by attacking liberal materials such as *He Shang*. The series was blamed for helping sow the seeds of the counter-revolutionary rebellion in 1989. Hong Minsheng, the then deputy director of the CCTV, the very channel that premiered *He Shang*, said in a blisteringly self-critical broadcast on the prime-time evening news: “*He Shang* was a

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<sup>49</sup> Examples include, Xiao (1994); Sheng (1996); and Wang (1999b; and 2000).

<sup>50</sup> It is worth noting that *Strategy and Management* eventually ceased publication in 2004, it was allegedly closed down by the authorities for being too critical.

propaganda coup for bourgeois liberalization. The broadcast of *He Shang* provided theoretical and emotional preparation for the recent turmoil and rebellion." He continued:

The essence of the film is to negate the socialist system, oppose the leadership of the Communist Party and propagate all-round Westernization. 'River Elegy' is the product of bourgeois liberalization, in collusion with the doctrine of 'peacefully transforming China' as peddled by the international reactionary forces. We should see that behind the series there is a life-and-death struggle for the Chinese nation and the socialist system (Kristof, 1989).

While denouncing this previously acclaimed TV series, Beijing quickly placed a carefully arranged patriotic education campaign in primary and secondary schools across the country, aimed at "correcting the lack of political beliefs, loyalty, and morality among the populace." (Zhao, 2004a: 218) Patriotic education<sup>51</sup> was simply to rebuild ties between individuals and the state, while reconsolidating the legitimacy of the communist state in the post-Tiananmen settings (Zhao, 2004a: 218 and 223). It is important to recognise that during the 1990s this state-led discourse of nationalism, expressing a very strong anti-imperialist and anti-American tone,<sup>52</sup> was exactly what popular nationalists of the 1980s had called for. This timely combination of these two forces provided the environment for a new form of nationalism to take root and thrive among the Chinese public.

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<sup>51</sup> For another account on Jiang Zemin's Patriotic Education Campaign, see, for example, Hughes (2006: ch.2).

<sup>52</sup> For a very good discussion on Chinese intellectuals' quests for national greatness and their nationalistic writings in the 1990s, see Zhao (1997).

One of the most influential pieces of literature on Chinese nationalism at the time was *China Can Say No* (1996), a collection of nationalistic writings edited by Song Qiang. Published against the background of post-Tiananmen state-led patriotic education campaign, the book draws heavy criticisms at the West, especially the United States. Attacking the ‘cultural fever’, the book argues the post-Cultural Revolution Chinese youth embraced Western values too strongly during the economic reforms in the 1980s, and thus neglected their own culture and heritage. Using the US government as the main subject for critics, the volume asserts that the main aim of the US government was to restrict China’s development, and hence its foreign policy towards China was dishonest and irresponsible (Song, 1996: 57). It also saw Japan as an ambiguous state, with a government not having a strong policy stance, but following the strongest power in the world (Song, 1996: 80). In addition, the book suggests the Chinese government and public shall stance firm – say No – against Western powers in the lights of the United States and Japan, by not simply accepting the Western-dominated global order and by asserting China’s own sovereignty demand in the Taiwan issue (Song, 1996: 44 and 119). Upon its release, *China Can Say No* quickly became a very popular read among the Chinese public, with its author Song Qiang becoming one of the best-known advocates of popular nationalism in China. Although the opinions promoted by Song appear to be overly nationalistic, the book does nevertheless shed some important lights on the characteristics of Chinese popular nationalism.

This new popular nationalism is different from state-led nationalism, and is certainly more powerful and popular than the outmoded Communist ideology. The main distinctions are twofold. Firstly, popular nationalism is mostly passive and reactive,

and unlike stated-sponsored nationalism it does not have to have a clear structure. Shambaugh has grasped this important feature of Chinese popular nationalism, when he characterises it as “defensive nationalism”, which is “assertive in form and reactive in essence” (1996b: 205). Secondly, popular nationalism is not necessarily fuelled by an official doctrine, like state-centric nationalism; it is often reinforced by a strong emotion of collectiveness, shared by common ancestry and perhaps most importantly, by memories of glory and agony (Wu 2007: 128). Western commentators have repeatedly attributed this solidarity exclusively to the CCP’s purposeful propaganda. While this common interpretation is certainly valid to some extent, the emotional aspect of it should not be underestimated or neglected altogether. For example, when observing the Western media coverage on the 1999 student protest against US bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Gries notes that the “West’s ‘party propaganda’ view focuses on the instrumental motivations of Chinese nationalism, dangerously dismissing their emotions as irrelevant” (2004: 20). Consequently, from a constructivist’s perspective, this work argues that Chinese popular nationalism is to some extent instrumentalised through the state-led construction of the ‘century of shame and humiliation’ discourse dating back the 1990s patriotic education campaign. As the same time, this constructed anti-Western, anti-Japanese sentiment, the thesis believes, continues to feed back into government’s internal and external policy considerations in the post-Cold War, post-Tiananmen era.

In short, this work believes that popular nationalism in China evolved from intellectual criticisms towards the 1980s “culture fever”. The essence of Chinese popular nationalism is similar to the state-led nationalism before the reform period, which contains a strong, albeit constructed, anti-imperialist, anti-West (including

Japan) sentiment. But unlike state-led nationalism, popular nationalism both came from grassroots level and spread at grassroots level. Whilst concurring with the consensus that the Patriotic Education Campaign helped the CCP leaders to redeem some much-needed unity in the society and reconsolidate some lost legitimacy from the Tiananmen crack down, this work does not see it as the sole reason for the apparent rise of nationalism in China. As presented above, popular nationalist movement existed prior to Tiananmen crack down. The crack down triggered the CCP to quickly reassess the possible side effects of its economic reform policy. Chinese government's promotion of nationalism might have speeded up its rise, but the anti-imperialist and anti-West nationalistic sentiment, genuine or not, has always been a significant element in the Chinese construction of 'us' and 'other' dating back to the aforementioned late-Qing period. Just like reform-minded intellectuals in the pre-ROC era responded to foreign military invasion, the early popular nationalists such as Wang Xiaodoing, Song Qiang and He Xin, reacted to the sudden 'invasion' of Western products, ideology, value, following the Deng's economic reforms. As China's economy continued its rapid growth, the technological advance in internet and social media has forever revolutionised the way popular nationalism is spread and presented.

### **2.3.2 Power of the Internet and the Rise of Cyber Nationalism**

The fast advance of internet communication technology is a crucial factor driving popular nationalism. The number of internet users in China soared from 22.5 million in 2000 to 420 million in early 2010, which currently counts about a quarter of the

total population.<sup>53</sup> China now has more than 450 million web users, about a quarter of the global total, and more than half of the Asian web users or netizen population<sup>54</sup> (CNNIC, 2011: 12). This fast development in internet accessibility has accelerated and broadened the Chinese public's access to information about events inside and outside the country. According to the latest official statistical survey, Chinese internet users are disproportionately young and well educated, with more than half of them (53.2%) aged between 20 and 40, and student making up the largest group of netizens (30.6%) in terms of occupation (CNNIC, 2011: 19-20). This coincides, as Shirk notes, with the population group that is considered most likely to engage in anti-foreign nationalist protest (2011b: 232). These young and well educated netizens are ever-so-eager to fully grasp the internet to gather real-time information, express opinion and participate in public affairs in a country, where previous generations of citizen had little opportunity for unconstrained public self-expression or access to free and uncensored information.

As internet access becomes more and more common in Chinese households, internet has gradually become an indispensable part of the life of urban residents. Internet Bullet Board System (BBS) forums, chat rooms and social networking sites have emerged as a popular choice for Chinese web users (网民 or netizens) to exchange information and to share their emotions, including nationalistic sentiment. By taking advantage of online technology, popular nationalists have gained an effective tool to promote the nationalistic causes among Chinese people around the world. These sentiments do not necessarily follow the lines of official state-promoted nationalism.

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<sup>53</sup> Figures gathered from *Internet World Stats*, accessed at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/cn.htm>. Accessed on 5/10/2010.

<sup>54</sup> Data from the latest report on China's Internet development, compiled by China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC), China's state network information centre.

Rather, they are often much more provocative and extreme, in terms of opinions and language. Despite certain government restrictions on its use, the Internet has been a preferred choice for popular nationalist to share, promote, spread and circulate its nationalistic messages, and to organise anti-foreign protests. As a result, cyber nationalism, a new post-Cold War phenomenon facilitated by the development in online technology, has grown swiftly.<sup>55</sup> This work sees cyber nationalism in essence being the online form of popular nationalism. In other words, cyber nationalism is a non-government-sponsored movement led by popular nationalists, as oppose to the CCP-directed patriotism. It has increasingly become an indispensable tool in the popular nationalist movement. Wu states,

Taking advantage of the online communication technology...Chinese cyber nationalists have been utilising the Internet as a communication centre, organisational platform, and execution channel to promote the nationalistic causes among Chinese people around the world (Wu, 2007: 3).

There are several qualities that made the Internet a catalyst for the continuous rise of popular nationalism.

First, online anonymity presents lower risks for web users to express opinions. Unlike the real world, internet is a vast virtual space, in which people know one another by their chosen user names. Communication is done hidden behind a physical computer screen. People can be faceless in this virtual world, and they can be anyone, and everyone, as “on the internet, nobody knows you are a dog”.<sup>56</sup> Comparing with

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<sup>55</sup> For one of the earliest studies on Chinese cyber nationalism, see Hughes (2000).

<sup>56</sup> This famous quote perfectly captures the spirit of the Internet. It originated from a cartoon by Peter Steiner. See Fleishman (2000).



traditional ways of face-to-face discussions and telephone communication, netizens do not need to compromise elements of their identity (e.g. appearance, voice) to convey messages across. As it will be demonstrated in subsequent case studies, online anonymity sometimes empowers Chinese netizens to express popular nationalist opinions both outwardly, and inwardly at one's own government. Therefore, in a country like China, where public expressions may only follow the official doctrine, cyberspace is a comparatively safer place to voice dissent. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the reason for terms such as 'relatively', and 'comparatively' being used is that China's cyberspace is far from totally free. Ever since the internet technology started to develop in China in the late 1980s, the CCP government has been constantly upgrading its online censor system, infamously dubbed the Great Fire Wall of China.<sup>57</sup> The government uses this system to filter out any information and opinion deemed a risk to social stability or attacking the CCP's rule.

Second, internet contains endless amount of information. The scope of information, knowledge and news that can be found online are far wider than traditional media outlets such as television and newspapers. More importantly, contrary to traditional media format, where people are passively fed with information, internet enables people to actively search for whatever information at one's will. In addition, because one intentionally searches for information, one only gathers materials that are needed or interested. For example, when Chinese netizens search nationalistic materials online, they would mainly receive information of a nationalist nature, such as China's

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<sup>57</sup> For analyses on the Great Fire Wall of China, see Deibert (2002); and *The Economist* (1998).

sufferings under foreign occupation, and China's lost territories. This means knowledge can be accumulated more easily and quickly.

Third, online news and information are instantaneously updated. In contrast to traditional media platform, the Internet is open 24/7, with no cut-off time. News can be loaded up from one corner of the globe and be viewed almost instantly by people from the other. This advantage is particularly significant when covering high-intensity and fast-developing events. Instant updates online allow netizens to closely keep pace with developments of a particular news or event. Crucially, thanks to its instantaneous and open characteristics, netizens are able to interact with news and events much more easily and conveniently online than via any other media platforms. In recent years, as the explosive growth in Internet access continues in China, BBS forum, weblogs, chat rooms and instant messaging services have become extremely popular channels for communication (Xiao, 2011: 205). Furthermore, thanks to its openness and the interactiveness, the Internet also enables ordinary people to be the news reporter, as they may reveal anything online from celebrity gossip to local government scandals. As subsequent case studies in Chapter Four and Five will show, this ability of instant interaction with current affairs and with other fellow netizens plays a critical role in Chinese popular nationalist movements today.

Finally, the virtual world is boundariless and has no geographical barriers. Through the internet, Chinese netizens may communicate with people across the length and breath of the earth.<sup>58</sup> It is this 'boundariless' nature of the Internet that has helped people to create millions of virtual communities for different issues, interests and

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<sup>58</sup> In theory this is true. But in practice, without anti-fire wall skills or software, Chinese netizens cannot access sites containing information deemed too sensitive by the CCP. These usually include, the Tiananmen crackdown, criticisms on Chinese human rights, Falungong, and Tibetan independence.

beliefs. Just like people join different clubs and societies for different hobbies and interests, within a virtue community, it is much easier for one's ideas or opinions to be understood, shared, reaffirmed and prospered. For Chinese nationalists, this means they are able to meet like-minded netizens who share similar nationalistic value and opinions. There are hundreds of nationalist forums in China. Some of them are more generally focused, where all issues concerning popular nationalists are discussed; others have chosen to concentrate on specific issues such as Sino-Japanese relations, historical issues with Japan, and boycott of Japanese goods.<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting that even on generally themed nationalist forums, predominant spaces are dedicated to issues regarding Japan. Again, the subsequent two case studies on Sino-Japanese relations will show the roles of these internet forums in shifting the dynamics of popular nationalism.

### **2.3.3 The Pride/Humiliation Complex in Chinese Nationalism**

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Chinese nationalism has deep roots stretching back to the indignities foisted on China by European imperialist powers and Japanese militarists during the 'century of shame and humiliation'. It was when China was at the hands of foreign powers that had led the forward-thinking elites to search for a new form of national identity that could unite and defend the Chinese nation. The victim-orientated aspect of Chinese nationalism represents China as a nation ruthlessly violated by Western imperialism after the Opium War from the mid-nineteenth century until 1949, when China's military and political weakness had

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<sup>59</sup> For examples of generally themed sites, see *Strong Nation Forum* (强国论坛): <http://bbs1.people.com.cn/>; *Utopia* (乌有之乡): <http://www.wyzsx.com/>; and *The Patriots Alliances* (爱国者同盟网): <http://bbs.1931-9-18.org/index.php>. For issue specific forums on Japan, see for example, *China-Japan Net Forum* (中日网论坛): <http://www.sjhistory.net/site/bbs/>; and *Anti-Japanese Goods Forum* (反日货论坛): <http://www.cnni.com.cn/bbs/>.

made it an easy prey to aggressive foreigners (Barme, 1995: 210). Therefore, from the outset, Chinese nationalism was strongly associated with anti-Western, anti-Japanese xenophobic connotations. Throughout the contemporary Chinese history, whenever China is perceived to have been badly ‘bullied’ by these powers, Chinese nationalists will come out and vent their anger. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the anti-American protests of 1999 and anti-Japanese demonstrations in recent years have all epitomised this victim orientation in Chinese nationalism.

This victim-orientated nationalistic feeling also forms part of the cornerstone for the Communist Party’s official nationalism discourses. According to the official narratives, it was the Communist Party that eventually achieved victory against the Japanese ‘invaders’ and ended the ‘century of shame and humiliation’. During the state-led patriotic education campaign, the CCP government not only reminded its people the glories of ancient Chinese civilisation, it also induced a heavy dose of “national humiliation education” that commemorates China’s defeats (Callahan, 2010: 14). School children were made to watch patriotic films, from a compulsory list drawn up by the central government. Museums, war memorials, battle sites, and war cemeteries were designated as “Patriotic Education Bases” (爱国主义教育基地), where school trips were taken to for the students to learn about Chinese heroic actions and foreign (especially Japanese) atrocities. In addition, several important museums on the War of Resistance against Japan, such as Nanking Massacre Memorial Hall, and Museum of War of People’s Resistance against Japan, were extensively renovated, with new ones constructed, including the Mukden Incident Museum in Shenyang.

It may seem odd for China publicly endorsing humiliation, after all, as Callahan observes, “common sense tells us that humiliation is something that is suffered in silence, rather than publicly celebrated” (2010: 16). However, the reason for the CCP to promote this negative victim image was that it would serve as a contrast for what the party had achieved, namely the founding of an independent new China. It helped the CCP to emphasise a strong sense of “redemption” (Callahan, 2010: 16), hence to boost the positive side of popular nationalism that is the pride of the Chinese nation. On 1 October 1949, when Mao Zedong declared, “Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. The Chinese people have stood up!” (Mao, 1977: 17), not only did he announce to the world the establishment of a new independent China, he also conveyed a perhaps more important message that the new country ruled by the CCP would never let its people to be mistreated by foreign powers. The painful historical experiences contrasting with China’s independence, Shambaugh argues, represent “the *raison d’être* of the modern Chinese Communist state, which came to power on a promise to unify the nation, restore its dignity and never again permit foreigners to subjugate, discriminate against or try to ‘split’ China” (2008).

It is precisely due to the humiliation narratives being so deeply rooted in the mind of Chinese people, that people share enormous sense of pride as China’s influence quickly grows. This strong sense of pride after humiliation reflects how Chinese position China on the world stage today. For many Chinese people, China is not a rising power, but a returning power. They argue that China had never “fallen off the world stage”, but merely faded away in the last century or so (Wu, 2007: 1). As China’s profile increases both in terms of politics and economic, Chinese popular

nationalists have been increasingly eager for the CCP leaders to steer China back to its “rightful place on the world stage” (Callahan, 2010: 15; and *The Economist*, 2010c). Furthermore, the sense of pride and the sense of humiliation are intertwined in Chinese popular nationalism dynamics. Put simply, “pride” comes from overcoming “humiliation”, “humiliation” arises from dented “pride”. Whilst Chinese people often feel immense pride whenever China achieves something on the world stage (e.g. in sport events), Chinese popular nationalism hits back when this achievement is discredited by other countries. Popular nationalists in China have “a very low threshold for foreign criticism, zero tolerance for ‘losing face’ (Shambaugh, 2008).

#### **2.3.4 The Pride/Humiliation Complex at Work**

The Anti-CCN movement prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics exemplifies the pride/humiliation complex operating in Chinese popular nationalism today. For the Chinese, the Beijing Olympics in 2008 are more than games; they generate immense national pride. As well as being a global sporting event, the Games were aimed at showcasing China’s rapid economic growth and prosperity, confirming, what Beijing believes to be the return of its rightful status in the international community (Cha, 2008: 107). However, as the whole country was putting the finishing touches on what turned out to be “truly exceptional Games”,<sup>60</sup> the preparations were hindered by the sudden outbreak of violence on the street of Lhasa and other Tibetan areas in China. The unrest occurred just days before the start of the much-publicised global Olympic Torch relay. The Tibetan riots drew strong criticisms from the West on Chinese government’s alleged heavy-handed approach to the crisis. Apart from the critical

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<sup>60</sup> Speech by Jacques Rogge (2008), the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

coverage from Western media, pro-Tibet, anti-China protests erupted along the torch relay route. Having witnessed the disruptions which anti-China protests created during several overseas legs of the Olympic Torch relay, the immense pride attached to the Olympics amongst the Chinese public soon became a huge humiliation. They felt the chaos had made China to “lose face” at a time when China should have been applauded by the world for organising such great spectacle. Hence, nationalist fury quickly raged across China.

As popular nationalists vented their anger online, they soon discovered that some of the Western media reports, such as Cable News Network (CNN), on the Tibet unrest used photo-editing techniques to dramatise the event and make the Chinese law enforcement agents appearing more aggressive. In response to this seemingly biased and inaccurate report, Anti-CNN.com was established to expose the “lies and distortions of facts from Western media” (*Takung Web News*, 2008). The website posted a collection of photos and video clips used in Western media outlets which were accused to be airbrushed or photoshopped. It instantly became a popular hit in online communities, and within days the site received more than 500,000 daily visitors and hundreds of volunteers emailed the site’s creator Rao Jin, offering help in gathering materials and doing translations<sup>61</sup> (*CCTV*, 2008). “做人别太CNN” (Don’t be too CNN)<sup>62</sup> became a very popular catch phrase in China, both in cyberspace and in daily life (*China Economics Network*, 2008). Apart from illustrating Western biases, Internet users in China shared their anger, frustration and other anti-West nationalistic sentiment with one another via chat rooms and forums. One of the biggest Chinese

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<sup>61</sup> For a personal account of the development of anti-CNN.com, please see an interview with Rao Jin (*CCTV*, 2008)

<sup>62</sup> A song with the same name was timely created by a famous online singer Mu Rongxun. The song too became an Internet sensation and a popular download in China at the time. A MTV version can be watched at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX28hMlkB5Y>. Accessed 15/11/2010.

language online portal sites, Sina.com, even set up a dedicated page under a nationalistic title “Chinese Netizens Firing at CNN and other Western Media”.<sup>63</sup> Other popular portal sites soon followed suit. The anti-West tone was particularly strong in nationalist forums.<sup>64</sup> In addition, thanks to the internet, the nationalist force in Mainland China was strongly supported by patriots worldwide, especially by Chinese students overseas.<sup>65</sup>

The anti-CNN movement demonstrated how popular nationalism transfers from pride-orientated positive feelings to humiliation-orientated negative sentiment. The Olympics Games, more than any other sporting event, have always been seen by the Chinese as a perfect opportunity for China to demonstrate state power (Cited in Yardley, 2008). Every four years, the nation glued to the television sets and supports their sporting heroes to great success. Not only does the feeling carry the great patriotic feelings of love one’s own country, with every gold medal won by Chinese athletes, it also brings out a strong nationalistic sentiment of redemption and vindication amongst the Chinese public. This sentiment came from the infamous title the “Sick man of East Asia” that had so long been associated with weakness in terms of Chinese individual physical power and China’s national power.<sup>66</sup> When referring to the

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<sup>63</sup> See <http://bbs.sina.com.cn/zt/w/08/attackcnn/index.shtml>. Accessed 12/11/2010.

<sup>64</sup> For example, *Strong Nation Forum*, <http://bbs1.people.com.cn/boardList.do?action=postList&boardId=1>; and *Utopia*, <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Special/zangdu/>. Both accessed 10/08/2010.

<sup>65</sup> A search for “藏独” (Tibet Independence) in title on powerapple.com, one of the most popular and influential overseas Chinese student forums, found more than 100 threads were posted between March and August 2008. Most of them were news and information updates, denunciations of pro-Tibet protestors, but some were calling or organising counter-demonstrations to support China. It is interesting to note that powerapple.com has always been blocked in Mainland China. Search result can be accessed at <http://forum.powerapple.com/modules.php?name=forum&file=searchtopic&forum=38&searchkey=藏独&uname=&start=0>. Accessed 11/08/2009.

<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, the term is reportedly first appeared as the title of a cartoon published in a Singapore in 1936 as Chinese delegation returns from the Berlin Olympics via Singapore. The cartoon portrays a



decision for China to host the Olympics in 2008, the phrase 圆了百年奥运之梦 (the 100-year-dream of hosting the Olympics Games has come true) was often used to indicate the length of time since China joined the Olympic Movement, and to express the immense pride that China's growing strength had been vindicated.<sup>67</sup> As a result successful hosting the Olympics in 2008 is seen by most Chinese as a confirmation of the PRC's great power status (Xu, 2008: 1-29; and Brownell, 2008: 19). This positive, pride-orientated feeling quickly turned into negative, raging nationalistic anger amid the critical coverage on China from the Western media. Popular nationalism swiftly spun into action in order to counter the claims made by Western media and defend China's image. The analysis on the anti-CNN movement has shown that these two mutually constitutive and yet distinctive mindsets, pride and humiliation, cannot be discussed in isolation. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that, it is not possible to understand the positive aspect of Chinese popular nationalism without fully comprehending the negative side.

## 2.4 Summary

This chapter has offered a comprehensive overview on Chinese nationalism. It has identified the birth of Chinese nationalism was due to European and Japanese powers occupation of China from the second half of the nineteenth century. It has presented the way which popular nationalism started to flourish at the grassroots level since the adoption of economic reforms. Critically, the chapter has assessed how popular nationalism compliments the state-led nationalism discourse, becoming a dominant

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group of skinny Chinese men with queue-styled hair, carrying a stretcher with a big zero on top (indicating China had won nothing from the games). See Hu (2008).

<sup>67</sup> The Chinese Olympic Committee was established in 1910, under Republic of China, and participated its first Olympics Games in 1932. For history of China in Olympic movement, see COC (2008).

yet volatile force to confront with any perceived foreign provocation. Furthermore, it has acknowledged the rise of internet communication offered popular nationalists a perfect platform on which their opinions may be spread and their actions may be coordinated.

Throughout the chapter, the importance of the “century of shame and humiliation” in Chinese nationalism discourse has been emphasised. In particular, the chapter has argued that Chinese popular nationalism presents a mixture of positive and negative discourse, partly due to government-led construction, partly due to China’s experience in contemporary history. The pride/humiliation complex is the core of popular nationalism today. It is this mutual constitutive relation between pride and humiliation sentiments that has created the popular nationalism dynamics in the post-Cold War China.

## Chapter Three: China and Japan – Near Yet So Far

Officially China has always described Japan as a “close neighbour, separated only by a strip of water” (一衣帶水的邻邦).<sup>68</sup> As close neighbours, China and Japan have a long history of trade and interactions. Indeed, Chinese civilisation has greatly influenced Japan with its writing system, culture and philosophy. However, due to the decline of late Qing Dynasty in China and Japan’s successful Westernisation in the Meiji Restoration in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and Japan’s subsequent invasions and occupations of China, the relations between these close neighbours have become somewhat alienated. The very narrow “strip of water” that separates the two nations with strong cultural connections, has become a battleground for several major territorial disputes that epitomises the current status of Sino-Japanese relations. The bilateral relationship between China and Japan has always attracted much attention from the academic field, as well as the general public in East Asia and beyond. Not only is it because the vital importance of two states being the most powerful in the East Asia, it is also due to the serious consequence and implications of any disturbance or friction in Sino-Japanese relations may have to the region and beyond.

Since the normalisation of relations between the two nations in September 1972, there have been ups and downs between the two governments in Beijing and Tokyo respectively. Perhaps, one could use the term “roller-coaster ride” as the best description for Sino-Japanese relations. Dreyer describes the bilateral relations as

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<sup>68</sup> The term was first included in the joint Communiqué for establishment of bilateral relations in 1972 (see Appendix I). It has been frequently used by both governments thereafter. Geographically, China and Japan are separated by a narrow stretch of Ocean—the East China Sea.

cyclical, “with periods of relative cordiality interspersed with episodes of contention” (2001: 373). During the Koizumi years as the Prime Minister of Japan, it was believed then, Sino-Japanese relations had hit the lowest point in three decades, and it was seen as the darkest hours since the normalisation in 1972 (Hsiung, 2007: xi; and *BBC News Online*, 2005).

This chapter presents an overview of Sino-Japanese relations. It offers a general understanding of the critical but sensitive element of popular nationalism in China’s stance and actions toward Japan, both in public and in decision-making process of the government. The chapter first provides a review on what has been an increasing academic interest in the studies of Sino-Japanese relations. The aim of this review is to gather together as much material as possible, then to review them in groups according to their different approaches and focal points. Only in this way, the review will offer a clear observation and a thorough understanding of the current literature. For the purpose of clarity only, the current literature on Sino-Japanese relations is split into two separated groups, namely, general introductory literature, and issue specific literature. Nonetheless, it certainly does not incline that the coverage of one piece of literature from one group is exclusive to that of the one from other groups. For example, when one considers Sino-Japanese relations, it is inevitable to talk about the history and the issues related to the war. Unsurprisingly, that is why all scholars in this field have acknowledged this and spent considerable ink on history and war in one way or another. The way the literature is separated is according to the main focal point or approach that each piece has been taken. The review also includes a general overview of Sino-Japanese relations in the post-Cold War period, and its current trends.

The second part of the chapter deals with the sensitivity surrounding matters concerning Japan in China's politics and public sphere. It explores the prominent position where Japan is situated in modern-day China's increasing popular nationalism. More importantly, it critically assesses the so called cycle of influences between policy makers (the state), the media and public opinions on China's relations with Japan whereby Japan or the nationalistic sentiment towards whom provides fuel; the internet and mobile communication technology act as effective carriers for it to go around.

### **3.1 General Introductory Literature**

There are vast amount of books and articles written on Sino-Japanese relations in general, which provide a good overview and hence a starting point of any relevant research. Howe (1996), Austin and Harris (2001), Dreyer (2001), Hsiung (2007), Iriye (1994), Calder (2006), and Rose (2005) are those this work has found particularly helpful to not only one's understandings of the issue and also to in depth thinking on the subject.

Dreyer's article titled 'Sino-Japanese Relations' is a short and concise summary on the contemporary issues lingering between China and Japan. She concentrates on the relevant events in the 1990s and the subsequent increasingly hardened approach from Tokyo to Beijing (Dreyer, 2001: 373). The Communist collapse, quickly followed by Chinese government's suppression of student demonstrators in June 1989, Dreyer argues, had caused a sharp drop in the favourable Japanese public views of China. This combined with China's seemingly belligerent behaviour had aroused

considerable concern for Japan, ultimately resulting in intensified frictions between the two governments (2001: 375-7). Moreover and perhaps most significantly for Dreyer, “the year 1995 proved a turning point for Sino-Japanese relations: Japanese concern at Chinese aggressive behaviour propelled Tokyo into a closer defence relationship with the United States and into undertaking a higher defence profile for itself” (2001: 385). The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-6, during which China repeatedly fired missiles over Taiwan and into waters with close proximity to Japan, has prompted Japan to participate in the United States-backed Theatre Missile Defence System (TMD). Thus, it created a new irritant in Sino-Japanese relations. Dreyer warned that the continuous deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations in the 1990s would become worse if hard-liners in both Beijing and Tokyo to exacerbate the difference between the two states and to adopt more assertive policies to one another (2001: 385).

History plays a pivotal role in Sino-Japanese relations. Therefore, many of these general literatures present a chronological overview on development of bilateral relations (Howe, 1996; Rose, 2005; Hsiung, 2007; and Iriye, 1994).

Iriye offers an interesting way of approach which focus on how relations between China and Japan have been affected by developments in the international community as a whole, and at the same time, have contributed to defining it. His book has clarified the nature of the interconnection between the bilateral relationship and global developments (1994: vii). In order to achieve this, Iriye places Sino-Japanese relations into the three dimensions of international relations, namely power, economics and culture, and argues that although three dimensions are overlap and affect on another,

but within a particular timeframe, they are by no means synonymous or interchangeable (1994: 4). He divided the modern history of Chinese-Japanese relations into three periods: from the 1880s to the First World War; from the end of that war to the Second World War; and the post-1945 years. Each period is then discussed in terms of the three dimensions. He argues that during the first period, with the Meiji Restoration, and Western colonial power enjoying territorial privileges in China, power took precedence over economics and culture in Sino-Japanese relations (Iriye, 1994: 27). In this period, Japan enjoyed the success of Meiji Restoration, with westernised economy and dramatic increase in military power. After defeating Qing China in the First Sino-Japanese War 1894-5, Japan established military and economic superiority over China, which was reinforced through colonial acquisitions from China (Iriye, 1994: 15). During the inter-war period, the driving element behind China-Japan relations was culture. He further argues that economics has been the primary factor in the post-war history of China and Japan. This is because, in the post-war era, China-Japan power relations were now becoming part of the global power system, in which “the United States and the Soviet Union enjoyed hegemonic positions. Given such circumstances, neither China nor Japan would enjoy military autonomy. Accordingly, economic and cultural factors would be of greater significance in the initial post-war phase of Chinese-Japanese relations” (Iriye, 1994: 93). The post-war cultural exchange promoted the reconnection between Beijing and Tokyo before the official normalisation. The cultural contacts might not have a direct impact on the two countries official relations. Nevertheless, the cultural ties, Iriye believes, may have helped sustain and promote the developing economic connections, thereby confirming the policy of *seikei bunri* (separation of politics and economics) (1994: 108-9). It is possible then to argue that in time the economics and

cultural ties might have grown to such an extent that pressures might have been generated for normalising diplomatic relations between China and Japan.

The edited volume *China and Japan: History, Trends and Prospects* by Howe (1996) represents another excellent introductory to Sino-Japanese studies. Being a volume with paper produced as a result of a conference held in Tokyo in 1990, the timing of this publication corresponds with the dramatic changes both in global settings at the end of the Cold War and in China after the Tiananmen crack down. Similar to Iriye's book, Howe's volume also attempts to examine Sino-Japanese relations within the global context. Perhaps more focused than Iriye on post-war Sino-Japanese relations, Howe's volume places heavy weight on the increasing bilateral and multilateral political (Shambaugh, 1996a: 83-97) and economic interdependence and its implications to relations between China and Japan (Howe, 1996: 98-126; and Yokoi, 1996b: 127-146). Howe's emphasis tackles the problem of the political economy in Sino-Japanese relations. On the surface, the pattern of a country's economics relations may be described in terms of statistics, but it is important, he argues, to bear in mind that economics relations are "interactions between economic, political, and even cultural factors in the broadest sense" (Howe, 1996: 2).

It is necessary to highlight a chapter by David Shambaugh (1996a) in Howe's edited book, as Shambaugh examines strategic dimension of in Sino-Japanese relations. The central focus of his article is whether the relations between the two powers will remain amicable or whether their historical rivalry will be re-ignited. He does this by assessing the factors of stability and instability in the emerging Sino-Japanese relationship. He argues that although potential disagreement could escalate to higher



levels of mistrust and rivalry, at the same time, the strength and depth of existing ties and the complexity of interdependence in particular will restrain the rivalry (Shambaugh, 1996a: 83). It is worth noting that some scholars already see the signs of strategic rivalry between China and Japan (Segal, 1993: 27-32; and Calder, 2006: 129-139).

Austin and Harris (2001) agree to Iriye (1994) that as China and Japan look to influence global order, so too does it influence them. They further argue that “[a]t very least, global and regional circumstances in a broad range of dimensions define the room for manoeuvre and the responses of the two governments in their mutual relations. Thus, the shape of the bilateral relationship can depend more on factors external to it than any factors under the direct influence of either government” (Austin and Harris, 2001: 2). However, different from other general literature on Sino-Japanese relations, Austin and Harris have enlarged their geographic scope, to introduce the Greater China (i.e. mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese, especially those in East Asia). As well as covering the usually issues in Sino-Japanese relations, a dedicated chapter discusses the issue of Taiwan, and the “One China” policy between Japan and China. Austin and Harris believe that such issues have been and will be an important factor in relations between the national governments in Beijing and Tokyo (2001: 4 and 119-151). With the return of Hong Kong and Macau to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 and 1999 respectively, Taiwan constitutes the unfinished element in the Greater China objective. The Taiwan issue has always been declared as the fundamental determinant of Beijing’s relations to all states. In addition, Taiwan has extra significance in relations between Beijing and Tokyo, since the island was under Japanese occupation and administration for fifty

years after the First Sino-Japanese War. Due to this colonial connection, China has been suspicious that Japan may want to maintain a “special” relationship with Taiwan. Beijing is also worried about the “pro-Taiwan” group in Japanese politics. Changes of political leadership in Japan, particularly at prime ministerial level can have determining implications to Sino-Japanese relations (Austin and Harris, 2001: 121). Their work reviews how various Taiwan and Hong Kong issues have played out in Sino-Japanese relations. It discusses Japan’s relations with Greater China economy and the influences at Japan “One China” policy. Finally, it covers in great details on the Taiwan Strait Crisis 1996 and the subsequent changes in US-Japan defence arrangements (Austin and Harris, 2001: 121-2).

The edited volume by Hsiung (2007) is one of the most updated books on Sino-Japanese relations. In this volume, a team of experts representing different shades of opinion and disciplines write on a broad spectrum of burning issues between China and Japan, with different perspectives. The book examines all aspects of Sino-Japanese relations, including historical root and cause of conflict (Chu, 2007: 23-42); the economic exchange amidst adversities (Cheng, 2007: 81-94); the military and security implication (Hickey and Lu, 2007: 95-112) and the sovereignty disputes (Suganuma, 2007: 133-172; and Yu and Kao, 2007: 173-192). Materials focus on the studies of these individual issues will now be reviewed.

### **3.2 Issue Specific Literature**

On war related issues, Rose (2005) provides a comprehensive historical approach to the understandings of Sino-Japanese relations. Her book presents a thorough, balanced and objective examination of the legacy of history, arguably one of the most

important issues that continue to plague the Sino-Japanese relationship. She uses Sino-Japanese reconciliation as the theoretical framework for her study. The theme “reconciliation” runs through the whole text of the book. Within this framework, she considers the different ways in which history is represented and remembered by China and Japan respectively. She also examines how the governments and people in Japan and China have come into term with the past. Rose argues that although China and Japan have been undergoing reconciliation for the past fifty years, fundamental problems relating to the war between the two countries still exist. This appear to “pose a formidable obstacle to settlement of the past and, therefore, to the smooth running of the relationship in the future” (Rose, 2005: 15). The aim of her book is to apply the understandings on the process of reconciliation to the case of China and Japan. Hence, it serves a means of explaining the efforts made by both governments and society to settle the past. She then studies several specific issues in Sino-Japanese relations, such as textbook problems, Japanese official apology, Japan wartime atrocities and compensation movement, and the Yasukuni Shrine visits. All these issues and a range of governmental activities, she argues, can be seen as “different stages along the path of reconciliation” (Rose, 2005: 15).

In her earlier publications (Rose, 1998; and 1999), Rose closely examines the 1982 history textbook event, focusing on the responses of Japanese government to Chinese and Korean protests and assessing Japan’s foreign policy making *vis-à-vis* China. She argues that disagreement between China and Japan on how to talk and remember the war history followed a “ritualized” course in the 1980s and 1990s (Rose, 1998: 187). The textbook issue of 1982 set the pattern for these reoccurring conflicts and their solutions. The question she was interested in was how to interpret these ritualized

diplomatic disputes. Rose believes the textbook issue is more than just “historical” *per se*. She disagrees with the conventional assumption that due to the horrific impact from the war, decision makers in both countries were and still are psychologically overwhelmed, therefore, accounts to the conflict over the history textbook issue. Instead, Rose argues there is more to it. In other words, Rose concludes that the controversy over textbook issue was not really about whether or not the Japanese government approve such textbooks that ignored Japanese atrocities in China and rest of Asia during the Second World War, but rather, about contemporary power struggles among the leads in China and Japan. In effect, Rose claims that here, “history” was a tool which both sides use to manipulate the present.

The Yasukuni Shrine visits is another highly controversial issue seems recurring in Sino-Japanese relations. Numerous journalistic and scholarly articles have centred their studies on this (Tamamoto, 2001; Shibuchi, 2005; and *The Economist*, 2002; 2005a; 2006a; and 2006b). It is worth mentioning that Shibuchi’s article studies the influence and role of Japanese rightist in the disputes of Yasukuni Shrine, and explains the aspect of “identity politics” in Japan. He argues that the essence of the Yasukuni Shrine dispute is a “clash of incompatible identities”; and because of these conflicting identities, the Chinese and the Koreans have no choice but to “oppose, dispute and demonize the Japanese rightists” (Shibuchi, 2005: 213). Hence, this tension appears to be almost irresolvable. The Chinese see the Shrine as honouring Japanese militarism; whereas, many of the Japanese public see it as honouring those who sacrificed their lives for the Japanese nation.

The security dimension of Sino-Japanese relations is also a field that received good attentions by the scholars. On this field, Wu scrutinizes the security relations between Japan and China from geopolitical perspective, presenting the security concern from China and Japan respectively (2000: 296-310). His article also includes a detailed study on the US-Japan security alliance and how it affects the views from China (Wu 2000: 298-304).<sup>69</sup> To the contrary, Takamine observes Japan's strategic use of foreign aid to China. Through three case studies of economic sanctions imposed by Japan on China in the 1990s, he looks closely how domestic political and bureaucratic interests motivated aid sanctions and determined the decision-making process leading to these sanctions. He argues "with certain politico-security interests, Japanese governments actively used foreign aid as a strategic instrument to counter provocative military actions by China in the East Asian region since the mid-1990s." (Takamine 2005: 439)

Other literatures on security relations are concentrated on sovereignty disputes between Japan and China, namely the Diaoyu Islands, (Yu and Kao, 2007; Suganuma, 2007; Tretiak, 1978; and Downs and Saunders, 1998-9) and specifically, the East China Sea (ECS) oil and gas field (Valencia, 2007). Most notably, several scholars have used the concept of nationalism to explain territorial disputes between China and Japan and the bilateral relationship as a whole (Hughes, C. R., 2006; Downs and Saunders, 1998-9; Rose, 2000; Shih, 1994-5; and Suzuki, 2007). Hughes presents an analysis of the tension between nationalism and globalisation in China since the beginning of the "Reform Era". He studies the link between Chinese nationalism and key areas of decision-making. He argues that popular nationalism fuelled the anti-

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<sup>69</sup> For Japan-US security alliance, see also, Christensen (1999).

Japanese sentiment in Chinese public. From time to time, Beijing utilised this to consolidate its legitimacy, but yet popular nationalism often pose a dilemma to Beijing. The authority understands the importance of maintaining a long-term good relationship with Japan, it fears that anti-Japanese sentiment could turn against the Communist government, as seen in the Tiananmen crack down. Public demands for tougher stance and action against Japan could eventually undermine the legitimacy that Beijing has hoped to be relied on nationalism in the post-Cold War era (Hughes, 2006: 146-151). On a similar level, Shih uses Chinese nationalist assumption to explain how China sees Japan. His analysis of China's policy towards Japan is based on studies of Chinese nationalism (Shih, 1994-5). Moreover, Suzuki views the contemporary conflicts between China and Japan are a result of the difference of identity. He argues that modern China's national identity has been characterized by an acute sense of "victimhood" arising from its turbulent interactions with International Society, and that Japan plays an important role as an "other" which enhances China's self-image as a "victim" (Suzuki, 2007: 23).

### **3.3 Ups and Downs**

Between 1972, the normalisation of bilateral relations, and the end of Cold War in late 1980s, China and Japan maintained generally stable and cooperative relations, with some observers noted as the "honeymoon period" (Jin, 2007: 11). This was largely due to a favourable international political background, where China and the United States were enjoying close relations, together with rather positive economic conditions, where China's chief reformer Deng Xiaoping adopting an open-up policy in 1978, dropping ideological and class struggle from Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) political doctrine and favouring economic trade and development. Since then,

however, Sino-Japanese relations have had a rather bumpy ride, while series disputes have been strong and persistent despite ever increasing bilateral trades.

The post-Cold War relationship between China and Japan is a paradox. Scholars and media in China frequently use the term “cold politics, hot economics” (政冷经热) to describe this general phenomenon of close economic trade, but intense political tension that seemingly characterises the post-Cold War Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>70</sup> On the economic level, the two countries enjoy complementary trade, investment ties, and maintains a rather healthy partnership. In 2007, China overtook the US as Japan’s biggest trading partner since World War II (WWII) with two-way trade totalling \$236.6 billion (*Reuters*, 2008). China has replaced the US as the largest export destination for Japan and Japan is also the third largest trade partner for China, behind the United States and the European Union. Japan is also an important source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for China, with the FDI figure reached \$69.48 billion by the end of 2009 (Zhang, 2010). Even at the height of the latest global economic crisis in 2008, the bilateral economic partnership was still tightly intertwined, with trade maintaining steady growth (Ding, 2010).

Yet, political relations between the two countries have remained relatively cool and unstable. It must be noted that the bilateral relations did not deteriorate in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and China’s Tiananmen crack down of 1989. Although it is well understood that Japan had little choice but to follow many Western states to enforce sanctions against China, Tokyo soon resumed its Official Development Assistance (ODA) with the third yen loan in July 1990. Tokyo saw the

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<sup>70</sup> See Jin (2002; and 2004); Liu (2007), esp. Ch 2 and Govella and Newland (2010).

incident as both a crisis and opportunity for its relations with Beijing (Wan, 2006: 24). On the one hand, strict sanctions and arms embargos applied by the European Union and the US would somewhat slow down the pace of military build-up in China, and therefore prevent China from seeking regional hegemony in the foreseeable future (Takamine, 2005: 444). On the other hand, Japan did not want China punished too harshly as it feared an unstable China and the serious implications for the East Asia region. This was demonstrated when Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visited China in August 1991, as the first G-7 leader to do so after the TSI. In addition, despite considerable domestic resistance,<sup>71</sup> the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko made a high profile state visit to China in October 1992, the first ever Japanese imperial visit to China. Both visits were warmly received by Beijing and the Chinese public (Wan, 2006: 24). The early 1990s the bilateral relations enjoyed its best period since WWII. Apart from the aforementioned two visits, there were regular mutual visits by the heads of government of both sides.<sup>72</sup>

During the latter half of the 1990s, however, problems and frictions between China and Japan surfaced and bilateral relations had experienced strong turbulence with many setbacks on major conflicting issues. From the high point of the imperial visit, bilateral relations contacted its first series of problems when Japan allowed Taiwan's Vice Premier to attend the Asian Games opening ceremony held in Hiroshima in September 1994, despite Beijing's strong protests (*People's Daily*, 1994). Beijing's position on the Taiwan question has always been an unalterably fundamental principle in its foreign policy.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, because of Japan's prolonged occupation of Taiwan,

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<sup>71</sup> See Kim (2001) for a detailed analysis on this imperial visit.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix V for a list of political exchanges between China and Japan.

<sup>73</sup> Kane (2001) provides a short but useful presentation on the guiding principles of Chinese foreign policy.



and subsequent connections with Taiwanese government and inherited influence of its culture, Taiwan is one of the most sensitive issues in Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>74</sup> The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-1996, made Japan's already delicate relations with China more difficult, as being at middle of China, Taiwan and the US. The crisis started when the US government, according to Qian Qichen (China's then Minister of Foreign Affairs), suddenly reversed its earlier promise to China and allowed Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States, with Lee duly accepting an invitation from his alma mater, Cornell University<sup>75</sup> in June 1995 (Qian, 2003: 305-306).<sup>76</sup> And only less than a year later, March 1996, in the run up of Taiwan's first direct elections for the President and Vice President, China conducted a series of military excises, including missile firing across the Taiwan Strait. It was intended as a show of force to intimidate Taiwanese public and electorate. This massive flex-of-muscle military manoeuvre not only triggered the US immediate deployment of two carrier battle groups to the area, it also, as Wan argues, "had a long term negative impact on Sino-Japanese relations; Japanese now saw China as a country that is too willing to use violence to advance its objectives" (2006; 24).<sup>77</sup>

The Taiwan issue not only greatly affects Sino-Japanese relations, it is also the most critical piece in the triangular chessboard consisting China, Japan and the US. Both Japan and the US were seeking to strengthen their alliance in the early 1990s to prepare potential new challenges to the regional security arrangement. The Taiwan Strait Crisis was believed to have accelerated the confirmation of new enhanced

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<sup>74</sup> For the importance of the Taiwan issue in Sino-Japanese relations, see Wang, Qingxin Ken (2000); and Yoshihide, Soeya (2001).

<sup>75</sup> See Cornell University's press release on the event, Cornell University (1995).

<sup>76</sup> In his book, as a top diplomat involving in the event, Qian presents inside perspectives of Beijing's stance and action plus the reactions from the US (2003: 305-310).

<sup>77</sup> See Ross (2000) for a detailed account and analysis on the Taiwan Strait Crisis 1995-1996; also see Wang (2000) and Nakai (2000) for Japan's role in the crisis.

alliance between Japan and the US (Asher, 1997). Despite Chinese government's strong objection, Japan and the US issued a Joint Declaration on Security on 17 April 1996, and ratified the new Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation on 23 September 1997, expanding the scope of Japan-US security cooperation to areas surrounding Japan.<sup>78</sup> The most controversial point in the new guidance for Beijing is the definition of "situations in areas surrounding Japan". Though the term is mentioned 23 times in the new guidelines, never once a clarification is made on what constitutes the surrounding waters and airspaces of Japan; and how far does the area stretch to? Beijing wanted Tokyo to declare that the surrounding areas of Japan do not cover Taiwan, but neither Tokyo nor Washington has provided a satisfactory answer to Beijing. China lodged a strong protest in August 1997, when Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama indicated that the new guidelines covered Taiwan (Midford, 2004: 126). If the areas included Taiwan, there would be significant implications for China's potential plans for Taiwan's reunification, as the TMD system in place would considerably weaken China's missile capability in the conflict, if the use of force was deemed necessary. In a wider context, China also extremely concerned that the enhanced security guidelines might give Japan the excuse to increase its defence capabilities, thus transforming the US-Japan alliance from "a vehicle that contain Japanese remilitarization into a vehicle that promotes it" (Midford, 2004: 115).<sup>79</sup>

Another important factor causing the decline in China's relations with Japan between late 1990s and early 2000s was the history issue, which is a general term used to

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<sup>78</sup> Both documents can be viewed online on Japan MOFA website. For the Joint Declaration, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>; for the New Guidelines, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>. Both accessed on 17/12/2010.

<sup>79</sup> For more studies on China's concerns and reactions to the new guidelines, see for example, Christensen (1999); Wu (2000); also in Chinese language, Liu (1997); Jin (1999); and Sun (2001).

describe several issues relating to the Japanese aggressions and subsequent war from 1930s to 1945. Generally speaking, the history issue includes the Japanese textbooks issue, Yasukuni Shrine and Japan's war apology. All these issues, at one point or another, have been unavoidable obstacles in development of the bilateral relations (*The Economist*, 2005b). Caroline Rose pointed out "the history problem centres on an inability to agree on a shared version (both within Japan and between Japan and China)" (2005: 5-6). Since 1982, the Chinese government and its people have been very sensitive to the way Japan's recognition and reaction to its aggressive past. China's official opinion regarding history problems places the "correct" recognition of past history as the precondition for Sino-Japanese cooperative relationship, it reads,

the correct understanding of history is a sensitive political issue in the bilateral relations...On the basis of respecting the history, the Chinese side wishes to look to the future and develop friendly relations between the two peoples from generation to generation. Nevertheless, the prerequisite for long-term bilateral cooperation is to face and recognize the history (MFA, 2002).

As the literature review above has presented, how China perceives Japan's attitude towards its past remains Beijing's critical prerequisite for stable development in political relations with Tokyo. In many dialogues commenting on Sino-Japanese relations, Chinese officials and media have frequently used the phrase "Taking history as the mirror, and looking forward to the future" (以史为鉴，面向未来), to insist what the "correct" attitude should be for Japan to face up its past.<sup>80</sup> It is worth noting here, for Beijing, "taking history as the mirror" is the vital precondition for "looking forward to the future". In Beijing's view, squarely facing the past and correctly

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<sup>80</sup> For example Wang, Y. (2005); and Wang, J. (2008).

understanding and handling history is the important foundation for further developing relations between Japan and China.<sup>81</sup> During the period of decline in bilateral relations, Beijing placed strong and repeated emphasis on the first part—taking history as the mirror—as it felt several actions by the Japanese government and officials did not represent what Beijing believed as the right approach towards Japan’s wartime history, thus undermined the historical elements in bilateral relations. These actions include Prime Minister Koizumi’s regular visit to the Yasukuni Shrine<sup>82</sup> during his term from 2001-2006. On every occasion, following Koizumi’s official visit to the shrine, China voiced its strong disapproval and condemnation to such action. Despite close economic ties, and geographic proximity, there had been no official visit by either side’s head of government between 2001 and 2006 (*The Economist*, 2005c). Moreover, China sees the Yasukuni Shrine as a place glorifies Japanese militarism, beautifies Japanese aggressions, and distorts the history of the Second World War (*People’s Daily*, 2006). Therefore, by visiting the shrine, the government of Japan is deemed as sympathising with Japanese militarism and taking on a revisionist view on its wartime history. Subsequently, the actions, Beijing argues, have grossly hurt the feelings of Chinese people (严重伤害了中国人民的感情). From China’s perspective, it is arguable that the insistence of Koizumi on visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine has catalysed deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations. Some even go further to state that the relationship between Beijing and Tokyo during the Koizumi term at the office has reached to its worst state – frozen point – since reconciliation (Fogarty, 2006).

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<sup>81</sup> This is stated Japan-China Joint Declaration of 1998, see Appendix III.

<sup>82</sup> See Shibuichi (2005) for an analysis on the Yasukuni Shrine controversy.

However, Beijing's strong and repeated emphasis on history did not go down well in Japan. The Japanese government felt it could never do enough for Beijing on the history issue. In Tokyo's view, although only a small minority in public and politics is considered as so called "history revisionists", Beijing keeps playing the history hand, and using as a diplomatic bargaining chip to pressurise Japan. The more Beijing raising the questions about history, the stronger the resisting force within Japan, both politically and publicly, as Japan becomes increasingly frustrated (Amako, 2004: 69). This confrontation is best illustrated during Jiang Zemin's state visit to Japan in November 1998. The trip was meant to lay the foundation for a new partnership, and to commemorate the 20-year anniversary of Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, China, and Jiang personally tried long and hard but failed to convince Japan to give in on the history and Taiwan issue. The final version of the joint declaration of the above treaty did not include a written apology, nor did it confirm Japan's support for One China policy over Taiwan (Wan, 2006: 25). What made it embarrassing for Beijing and President Jiang angry was that the fact Tokyo had made a formal written apology with South Korea a month earlier when President Kim Dae-jung visited Japan.<sup>84</sup> In the remainder of his visit, Jiang notably vented his disappointment to his host by delivering a series of strong rebukes over Japan's past. To great surprise and shock for the Japanese officials, President Jiang lectured on the wartime past in his speech during the state dinner hosted by the Emperor Akihito (Sieg, 2008). Privately, many Japan specialists in China and foreign policy officials

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<sup>83</sup> There are thus far four principal documents serve as the legal basis for China-Japan diplomatic relations. This is the second document, following the Joint Communiqué, See Appendix II for the content.

<sup>84</sup> Japan and South Korea signed a Joint Declaration, in which it states "Looking back on the relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea during this century, Prime Minister Obuchi regarded in a spirit of humility the fact of history that Japan caused, during a certain period in the past, tremendous damage and suffering to the people of the Republic of Korea through its colonial rule, and expressed his *deep remorse and heartfelt apology* for this fact [emphasis added]" (MOFA, 1998).

concluded Jiang's 1998 visit a serious failure (Wan, 2006: 25; Interview C, 2009; and Interview D, 2009).

After this diplomatic disaster, Beijing quietly sought to reverse its tone towards Japan by reducing the emphasis on history, and paying more positive attention to the part of "looking forward to the future", in order to concentrating on improving future relations. Articles stressing the impotence of maintaining "friendship with Japan were commonplace in by the spring of 2000" (Rozman, 2002: 113). On official level, China's then Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said "China would judge relations with Japan from a long-term and strategic perspective" (Shirk, 2008: 167). Furthermore, to make a friendly gesture, for example,

Jiang met a 5000-member Japanese delegation on May 20, 2000, and emphasized the importance of a good relationship with Japan. Premier Zhu Rongji visited Japan in October 2000...he had told Japanese journalists that he would not volunteer discussion of history during the trip (Wan, 2006: 26).

This softened "smile diplomacy" approach did not go unnoticed by the Japanese officials and media, as they recognised this shift as signs of Beijing wanting to change public opinions and attitudes toward Japan (Rozman, 2002, 113).

The above examples of Yasukuni Shrine and Jiang's 1998 visit to Japan have demonstrated the sensitivity of history issues in Sino-Japanese relations. The root of issues of history between China and Japan, is not the historic event – war and atrocity – itself, rather it is the difference in interpreting and evaluating history. The reason for this difference is more ideational than material. This is to say that different levels of

emotional attachment to that period of history more than the significance of the historic event itself cause the difference in interpretation, and more importantly, in evaluation. However, by say this, it is necessary to clarify that it is not intend to diminish the significance of wartime history for the people and governments of both states. In fact, it is arguable that history, the experience and portray of it, as ideational factors, indeed shape people's perceptions and understandings. In the case of Japan, as discussed in Chapter Two, the wartime history strongly fuels the anti-Japanese nationalism in Chinese public opinion, which in turn, as will be presented in the two cases studies in Chapter Four and Five, adds implications to Beijing's Japan policy considerations.

Overall, the post-Cold War Sino-Japanese political relations have been fluctuating and inconsistent, presenting a general pattern of ups and downs. The relations remained reasonably good despite the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989, as Tokyo did insist with punitive sanctions against Beijing; and reached its height during the Imperial visit in 1992. Bilateral relations began to deteriorate in 1995 and reached a deep freeze throughout Prime Minister Koizumi's six years in office. Koizumi's resignation in 2006 offered a good opportunity for a fresh reconciliation of relations. Koizumi's successor Abe Shinzo quickly managed to reverse the ties with China, by travelling to Beijing just days after becoming the Prime Minister, the first bilateral summit for five years.<sup>85</sup> The "ice-breaking" trip was seen great significance in rapprochement of Sino-Japanese relations (Chang, 2006; Liao and Li, 2006). Abe was well-received by Beijing with President Hu declaring the visit a "positive" step and Premier Wen promising friendly, cooperative relations (*BBC News Online*,

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<sup>85</sup> See Appendix V. By choosing China his first overseas visit, Prime Minister Abe has also broken with the tradition of new Japanese Prime Ministers making their first foreign visit to Washington. This shows the importance Tokyo attached to the trip (*BBC News Online*, 2006a and 2006b).

2006b). Fukuda Yasuo continued Abe's good work in rebuilding Sino-Japanese relations when he took over the office of Prime Minister in September 2007. It can be said that during Fukuda's short term at the office, the relations between China and Japan reached a new high. This was illustrated by a series of high profile political exchanges, including the Fukuda's visit to China in December 2007 and President Hu's return trip in May 2008.<sup>86</sup> Diplomatically, it is very rare for the mutual leaders' visits being so close to one another (with only five months apart). More importantly, this renewed friendship also shown in increased bilateral exchanges in a wider context. The most significant example perhaps was the exchange visits by the two navies, which was the first mutual port visits since WWII.<sup>87</sup> Despite taking some positive steps to rebuild relations with China, the main problem for the post-Koizumi reconciliation is that Japan's domestic politics are not stable with frequent changes of Prime Ministers,<sup>88</sup> so Beijing has to constantly get to know new faces, no close personal relationship of the leaders, like previously between General Secretary of the CCP Hu Yaobang and then Prime Minister Nakasone, can be formed (Interview C, 2009). Hence both sides cannot set a solid framework in which serious and prolonged discussions of some important issues in bilateral relations can be taken place. In addition, major issues in Sino-Japanese relations, being such sensitive matters, still remain unsolved, therefore will from time to time flare up to destroy any good work that has previously been laid down.

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<sup>86</sup> See Appendix V.

<sup>87</sup> For Chinese media coverage and analysis see *Xinhua News* (2007; and 2008); Feng (2008). It is believed that China's warship visit to Japan was initially planned for 2002, to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishing diplomatic tie. The plan was however aborted due to the rapid deterioration of relations as Koizumi visiting the Yasukuni Shrine (Chen, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Since Koizumi, there has been five Prime Minister in office to date, and none of them has lasted for over a year.



### 3.4 A Sensitive Matter?

Today, of all China's foreign relations, Sino-Japanese, along with Sino-American, relations perhaps attract the greatest interests from the public and the media, where public opinion may have most impact on its decision-makings. As discussed in Chapter Two, defining and redefining national identity has become a prominent feature in China's post-Cold War society, and Japan has always been a central target for the drawing on victimization-based nationalism in the 1990s, national identity has a greater than ever profound impact on how China plays out its relations with Japan. How one government and its people view their own country and its place in the world as well as how they perceive their counterpart make important contributions to "how issues are interpreted and how policy goals and approaches are defined" (Wan, 2006: 158). "Us" can be used to define "other" as "other" can be used to define "us". In China, the ever-shifting definitions of "self" and "other" are critical to its dynamic, if not sometimes volatile, interactions with Japan.

Commercialisation of the media in the late 1970s and more recent explosion of internet access have transferred this process of definition from one directional, government endorsed to multidirectional, which in turn, has made matters and actions on Japan much more complicated.<sup>89</sup> In other words, today's media and Internet have broken the CCP's absolute monopoly on generating public interests and perceptions

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<sup>89</sup> The commercialisation of China's media happened gradually since 1979, when it allowed newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations to support themselves by selling advertisements and competing in the marketplace. Nevertheless, the media remains heavily controlled by the CCP, which can easily stop or even shut down any media outlets that are perceived to have violated its strict censorship rules. For a very comprehensive and up-to-date discussion on China's media and its influences, see Shirk (2011).

toward Japan; hence public opinions have become difficult to direct but more significant to be taken into consideration.

### **3.4.1 Media: Nationalism Sells**

The Communist Party of China has always recognised the indispensable value in information. Even in its early days, the CCP understood that the pen (笔杆子) is just as important as the gun (枪杆子) in gaining and maintaining political power.<sup>90</sup> Propaganda was used widely and effectively as a vital tool for the CCP to gather support and popularity during the War of Resistance (1937-1945), from which the CCP had firmly established its political legitimacy over China.<sup>91</sup>

The commercialisation of the media and the emergence of the internet have revolutionised the way Chinese leaders and the public interact in both domestic and foreign policy issues. Instead of the old dogmatic propaganda directed from the top, the interactions between the media, the public and the leaders have become multidimensional. Opening up the marketplace for media outlets in China means that media companies jousting for readership and competing for the market. As a result, like editors everywhere, Shirk observes, “Chinese editors seek to attract audiences by dramatizing international news events, exaggerating threats, and emphasizing conflict over cooperation” (2011b: 226). For reporting international affairs, this sensationalist reporting style runs much less risk with the propaganda officials than doing so for

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<sup>90</sup> Several old guards of the CCP had reiterated this. Collectively, it called the power of the “Two Sticks” (两杆子), i.e. the pen and the gun. Mao Zedong once famously declared, “political power grows out of the barrel of the gun” (枪杆子里出政权). Lin Biao, once Mao’s most trusted lieutenant, is attributed to have commented, “gun and pen: to seize power needs them, to consolidate power also needs them” (枪杆子, 笔杆子, 夺取政权靠这两杆子, 巩固政权也靠这两杆子).

<sup>91</sup> The Communist Party also used sympathetic foreign correspondences to spread out its messages regarding the Chinese Revolution and its efforts against the Japanese. The best example of this perhaps is Edgar Snow and his book *Red Star over China*.

domestic issues. This is because being critical in domestic reporting often means criticism of CCP officials. The government is very sensitive to domestic issues, thus critical report of which is considered as destabilising factors for the society and ultimately the CCP's rule.

On international affairs, on the other hand, in a reversal of the old cliché – no news is good news – China's commercial media seems to believe good news is no news, as it does not generate big sales (Shirk, 2011b: 226). The more threats, crises, and hostilities, the more viewers are attracted to news programmes, hence the better for the success of the media company. Japan, always an emotional and sensitive subject, provides a perfect platform for this new nationalistic sensationalism in media. Unlike most foreign policy issues, which receive relative little public attention and media coverage, even minor events and seemingly irrelevant news to bilateral relations can become headlines and evoke a strong nationalistic response. In today's China, Sino-Japanese friction emerges not only in traditional state-to-state diplomatic relations, but also in popular nationalist movements (Callahan, 2010: 161). Every remark and action by Japanese officials, every flaw in Japanese products, every misbehaviour of Japanese student or tourist to China, even every comment on Japan by Chinese public figures, is an opportunity for tabloid newspapers and internet websites to attract audiences and whip up popular nationalistic passions (Shirk, 2008: 156). For example, when a famous Chinese actress Zhao Wei appeared on a fashion magazine's cover wearing a short dress with patterns similar to that of the imperial Japanese flag in December 2001, it made a huge public stir. Hours after its revelation, angry messages flooded Internet forums and chat rooms, as the flag is considered as a potent symbol of Japanese militarism and the atrocities it committed to the Chinese people. The

editor of the magazine was forced to resign, and Zhao had made numerous public apologies on television and online. Nevertheless, none of this was enough to ease the public anger, at a New Year's party in Hunan province, an enraged man walked on the stage while Zhao was performing, and smeared excrement on her.<sup>92</sup> Other similar examples that caused widespread fury towards Japan include a large Japanese tourist group was exposed to have involved in a three-day orgy with Chinese prostitutes at a luxury hotel in Zhuhai, South China, on and around 18 September 2003, a painful anniversary of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931;<sup>93</sup> and the Toyota delayed recall request in its Chinese market as part of its global product recall in early 2011.<sup>94</sup>

All three incidents highlighted above attracted great interests and sparked fury among the Chinese public. Although none of the event had anything to do with politics or diplomacy, they potentially could become political because of sensational reports and infuriating nationalistic messages exchanged on the Internet. As a result, stories had been followed continuously as they made good business sense for the media. Sensational coverage in the official media of incidents like these has served to stoke the flame of Chinese resentment; resentment, anger and nationalistic passions have helped the media outlets to sell more newspapers and rise the popularity of their websites in return for potentially more advertising revenues. Shirk sums up very well on this nationalism-sells phenomenon, "Anti-Japanese stories are too good a draw for commercial media to give up" (2008: 157).

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<sup>92</sup> The event attracted such public interest that a special report site was created to follow it on people.com.cn, the official website for *People's Daily*, see <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/wenju/223/7010/index.html>. Accessed on 15/03/2011.

<sup>93</sup> This is first revealed by *Beijing Youth Daily*, see Xiang and Lin (2003); for report in English see BBC News Online (2003).

<sup>94</sup> See Xinhua News (2011).

### **3.4.2 The Internet: A Thermometer for Public Opinion**

The rapid development of Internet technology and an ever-growing large population of netizens (web users), as discussed in Chapter Two, becomes a vital driving force for China's grassroots nationalism.

The expansion of Internet together with the recent speedy rise of blogging, instant messaging and social networking services in China have revolutionised the way in which news and information are spread, digested and interacted among the government, the media and the public. This has given the Chinese netizens an unprecedented capacity for communication. Xiao Qiang identifies that the Internet Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) play a "particular important role in Chinese Internet life", and gradually become the "primary way that Chinese netizens access and transmit information online to a large number of people, almost as effectively as mass media" (2011: 204).<sup>95</sup> Increasingly, Chinese netizens use the social network services such as BBS forum to disclose news and information, such as scandals, injustice, alleged corruptions, mistreatment by local authorities, most of which are too sensitive to be published in the official media.<sup>96</sup> These cases are then picked up by fellow netizens and quickly passed around the internet in weblogs, chat rooms and by instant messages. The cases can become extremely popular in online community within hours as this process is repeated. Almost instantaneously, cases are widely discussed and debated with opinions shared across Internet BBS forums, weblogs, and in chat rooms. Due to their rapid rising profile of these news and information, traditional media are forced to follow the cases in order to respond the needs of the market.

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<sup>95</sup> The latest CNNIC report shows that by the end of 2010, China had 295 million bloggers, with an annual increase of 33%; more than half of all netizens use social networking sites; and 80% of China's Internet sites had their own BBS forums, with popular forums such as Tianya Club and Mop.com attracting tens of millions registered users (CNNIC, 2011: 36-38).

<sup>96</sup> Several such cases are studied in Xiao (2011).

It is worth noting that this form of netizen-reporting mainly limited to domestic issues. Due to China's sophisticated online firewall systems, it is very difficult for ordinary citizens to directly access unrestricted foreign news, therefore much harder for Chinese netizens to expose news from overseas. Nevertheless, domestic cases may easily spark nationalistic sentiment if in any way involving a foreign country, especially Japan. For instance, questions were raised when a well-known Chinese actress was falsely revealed online to have held a Japanese nationality. It happened in summer 2009, when the actress, Xu Qing was set to portray Madam Sun Yat-sen in a showcasing film to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the PRC on 1 October 1949.<sup>97</sup> Netizens questioned casting a Japanese national to play such a prominent Chinese political figure in a film with such high political importance. Others went further to label Xu as a traitor and asked how could a traitor to the country portray an important founding member of the PRC. What is interesting is that of the all-star cast in the film, several of them are real foreign nationals, but Xu was singled out perhaps because it was Japan. In order to clarify this accusation and respond to public criticism, Xu late had to disclose her Chinese identity card to the public, declaring that she did not, and would never adopt Japanese nationality.<sup>98</sup> Thanks to the growing popularity of social media sites, through the use of the internet as a new media source, the general public are now able to report, spread and make comments on news in China.

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<sup>97</sup> Madam Sun Yat-sen was amongst China's most significant political figure in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, she was the Vice Chairman of the PRC at its establishment. For Xu Qing's "nationality gate", please see *China News Network* (2009).

<sup>98</sup> Chinese law does not accept dual-nationality; one automatically gives up Chinese nationality upon becoming a foreign national. So by showing she still holds a Chinese Citizen Identity Card, she can prove she has not join any other nationality.

On international affairs, although it is harder for Chinese netizens to play the reporting role, the Internet provides them with a rather effective tool to play the broadcasting and most importantly, the commentating role. This is particularly demonstrated with issues and events concerning countries, such as Japan, that have traditionally been targeted by Chinese nationalism. By reporting however minor issues concerning the so-called “controversial” countries, newspapers and the Internet web portals, the online community will react with passionate nationalistic sentiment on the BBS forums and in chat rooms across China. It should be mentioned that the State Council Information Office (SCIO), China’s news/information regulator, seems to be more open and tolerance towards international issues than domestic ones (Shirk, 2011b: 226). The reason for this is that, as discussed in Chapter Two, the government’s propaganda department has been the major promoter for patriotism; hence, it has to be very careful when choosing to suppress nationalistic sentiment online.

With commercial media finding nationalism a good selling point, the public’s lack of direct access to foreign news sites, and the state’s relative tolerance in nationalistic comments, Chinese people frequently use the Internet share their nationalistic opinions and vent their anger at Japan. Not only is the anti-Japan banner waved on general discussion forums whenever a relevant issue pops up, there are also several popular BBS forums that maintain a strong nationalistic tone, where anti-Japanese sentiment are continuously voiced. The *Strong Nation Forum* perhaps best represents this. Created in the wake of the 1999 US bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the forum is sponsored by the *People’s Daily* and is attributed as an important development in Chinese popular nationalism (Shen and Breslin, 2010). The forum

has a specific section for Sino-Japanese relations – no other bilateral relationship has its own section, browsing through the China-Japan section, it is not hard for one to discover a pattern of posting. While the section keeps a constant monitor on anything to do with Japan and with odd critical comments thrown in, it is whenever an issue breaks out, the forum soon explodes with hatred messages expressing strong anti-Japanese sentiments. If there is any discontent about the nationalistic opinions, the person(s) is quickly accused as betraying the Chinese nation and labelled a traitor. Peer pressure from fellow netizens can be a significant factor in opinions forming and sharing in an online community, as people naturally want to be a part of group with similar views and characteristics. Essentially, no one would like to be criticised or even insulted by faceless total strangers. Therefore, there may be too much psychological pressure that any different voice may be reluctant to come and express true opinions. For the same token, people may simply follow or concur with nationalistic sentiment in order to earn credit and popularity ratings on the BBS or social networking sites. The following two case studies will look into this more closely. Generally speaking, with a young active dominant group, immense peer pressure, plus tabloid media's exploration of nationalism, the online community in China today does show a strong anti-Japanese public opinion.

The new online social media platform also presents critical challenges for the CCP to contain and control the spread of information. Due to the its decentralised, instantaneous, anonymous, and boundariless nature of the online technology, it potentially posts “grave threat to any governing measure that is highly centralised, bureaucratic, and parochial” (Wu, 2007: 137). Whilst, the CCP understands that it is nearly impossible to maintain total control over the cyberspace, nevertheless, the



internet offers the government an effective way to promptly and accurately gauge public opinions on any breaking events. This enables a swift evaluation to public reactions and appropriated responses taken by the government. Shirk here illustrates how tabloids and Internet are used to “test the water” for the public opinions:

Whenever a foreign policy official tells me that he or she feels under pressure from nationalist public opinion, I ask, “How do you know what public opinion actually is?” “That’s easy,” the official says. “I read *Global Times*<sup>99</sup> and the Internet.” (Shirk, 2011b: 230).

Regarding to Chinese netizens’ behaviour and its impacts on policy makers in Beijing, Daniela Stockmann (2011) offers a detailed study on government’s response in terms of information management, to the public opinion crises, referring to “a situation in which public opinion and the position of the state on a particular issue are in disagreement, thus endangering social stability and economic growth” (Stockmann, 2011: 176). Rising popularity in the new web-based media source, Stockmann argues, has presented a platform on which information that differs from the position of the government may be distributed, thus “simulating distrust in government and encouraging people to protest against government actions” (2011: 176). Contrary to the usual evidence in social psychology and communications indicating that people tend to selectively seek information consistent with their beliefs and avoid information that contradicts their beliefs, Stockmann’s study on the interactions between the Chinese public and Beijing’s media management shows that under state-

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<sup>99</sup> *Global Times* 《环球时报》 is considered as a prime example for sensational reporting and nationalist headlines, on which its readership strives. It is the tabloid version of its founder, the CCP’s flagship mouthpiece, *People’s Daily*, with most of its readers being well-educated, upper-income young urbanites. See Shirk (2011b: 227-230) for a specific discussion on *Global Time* and its impact on mobilising public opinion on foreign policy. For a critical view on *Global Time*’s sensationalising international news and pandering to nationalism, see *China Digital Times* (2008).

initiated synchronisation on media reports, new media sources would be able to aid the government in “appeasing” public protest rather than “mobilising it” (Stockmann, 2011: 176 and 185). This is because, as Stockmann explains, “the commercial look of domestic media source [in China] creates the perception of a media outlet that represents the public as opposed to the state and thus aids the government in guiding public opinion to favour its politics” (2011: 198). Stockmann’s view will be further reflected in Chapter Four, when the thesis also studies the 2005 anti-Japanese protests. This case will argue that government’s careful management on information acts as an effective mechanism to control the release of popular nationalist anger.

### **3.4.3 Public Opinion: Unpopular Japan**

Negative opinion towards Japan in the Chinese online community is reflected on the three major social surveys on public view of Japan, conducted by the Japanese Studies Institute at the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences (CASS).<sup>100</sup> The three major surveys were conducted in 2002, 2004 and 2006, with the results showing strong similarities, suggesting no significant change in Chinese public’s attitude towards Japan. In all three surveys, more than half of the participants do not have close feelings for Japan, with only around 7% responding with positive feelings, despite the geographic proximity between the two countries. In the 2006 survey, when asked the reasons for the non-friendly feelings, overwhelming majority pointed at history issues (“Japan had invaded and occupied China”—27.3%; “Japan has yet to face the history squarely”—63.3%).

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<sup>100</sup> For evolutions of the surveys see Jiang and Wang (2009), for the survey questionnaires see Li and Zhou (2009: 178-184). Subsequent discussions are based on the survey results.

Moreover, the 2006 survey shows that more than one third of the respondents thought the current relations with Japan as not being good (34.3%), and the other one third believed bilateral relations as being “neither good nor bad” (35.3%). In contrast, only about 10% of replies responded positively on the status of Sino-Japanese relations. In addition, the results also show that most respondents thought the Chinese media coverage on Japan as being fair and objective (62%), whereas, the Japanese media coverage on China as being too negative (50%). From these figures, it is not hard to draw the conclusion that Chinese public holds a relatively negative perception on Japan and Japanese politics. However, it should be mentioned that the methods by which these survey were conducted might be debated. Take the 2006 survey as an example; the survey was only lasted about two weeks, with 4066 questionnaires sent and 3915 return across the vastly populated nation (Jiang and Wang, 2009: 5). The samples were chosen randomly with people responded voluntarily. Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that not only the sample size might be too small to represent the whole population, but also those of who did respond to the survey might have already held strong opinions on the subject. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know by what means the poll was conducted, as it may lead to biased result. This is because if the survey were conducted online only, as college-educated young urbanites (aged 30 and below) being the dominant and most active amongst the Chinese netizens, the result would overly reflect opinions of this group, but not necessarily the perceptions of the wider public.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.5 Summary

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<sup>101</sup> Although this is not to say that there is no strong anti-Japanese sentiment in general public, nor does it imply that anti-Japanese connotation is not an important element of popular nationalism in China.

This chapter has not only reviewed current academic studies on Sino-Japanese relations, it has also offered a concise account on the “ups-and-downs” nature of the bilateral relations since its normalisation. The turbulent progress has demonstrated that Sino-Japanese relations are principally issue-oriented and largely driven by breaking events. Additionally, from China’s perspective, the chapter has explored the complexity in dealing with Japan. It has discussed how commercialised media and the ever-growing internet users in China have helped make the Sino-Japanese relationship China’s most emotionally charged international issue. The chapter has made a critical assessment on how policy makers, commercialised media and the rapidly expanding online community in China shape contemporary popular nationalism *vis-à-vis* Sino-Japanese relations.

As it is often the case in Sino-Japanese relations, when strong nationalistic sentiment is generated in public sphere via the Internet and sensational media coverage, the foreign policymakers often feel especially constrained by nationalist public opinions and are forced to respond, no matter how trivial the issue (Shirk, 2011b: 226). This effect shall now be systematically analysed via the 2005 anti-Japanese movement case, and the Diaoyu Islands dispute case, in the following two chapters.

## Chapter Four: The 2005 Anti-Japanese Protest

In the spring of 2005, large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations erupted in many cities across China. The protests lasted for more than three weeks, and made headline news across all forms of media in China and around the world. It was the first nation-wide nationalist demonstration since the 1999 anti-American protests following the bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade. In terms of scale and duration, the 2005 protest was considered the largest public demonstration since the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. The mass demonstrations were triggered by the United Nation's (UN) proposal on possible reforms or expansion of the Security Council (UNSC), and Japan being the candidate for a permanent membership in the enlarged UNSC. By following the development of the event in chronological order through media reports, and examining existing academic works on this event (Stockmann, 2011; and Weiss, 2008), this chapter explores the interactions between the central government of the Communist Party (CCP) and the mass nationalistic public. In other words, it seeks to understand Beijing's responses to this event, on domestic and on international levels. The chapter aims to assess the extent this mass popular nationalism movement had affected or assisted Beijing foreign policy stance.

The chapter begins with a brief overview on the general status of Sino-Japanese relations leading up the protest, and issues that prompted the mass nationalist movement. This follows by a presentation on the narrative of the events, weaving together the domestic and international levels. Along side with the narratives, here the responses from the nationalists and Chinese government are used to interpret their

respective motives and reasons. Finally, the chapter assesses to what extent did Beijing manage to instrumentalise anti-Japanese popular nationalism to reaffirm its opposition to Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC.

## 4.1 Background

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, it is not an understatement to claim that the political relations between China and Japan were perhaps at its lowest point in years leading up to 2005. Despite booming economic relations between the two countries, the bilateral political exchange was literally frozen with no top-level visits by either side since 2001,<sup>102</sup> prompting some commentator to change the phrase that commonly describes Sino-Japanese relation from 政冷经热 (cold politics, hot economics) to 政冰 (icy politics). Several issues, China blamed, had caused this diplomatic alienation.

The first issue was Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro paying repeated visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine since he came to the office in 2001. China sees the Yasukuni Shrine as a place that glorifies Japan's militarist past. Among the 2.5 million spirits venerated for the people who lost lives for Japan, the shrine includes fourteen Class A war criminals who were executed after the Tokyo war tribunal in 1948, and thirteen of them had direct involvement in Japan's invasion of China (Shibuishi, 2005: 198; and *People's Daily*, 2006). This includes the names of Hideki Tojo and Itagaki Seishiro.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, Yushukan, the shrine's war museum, offers a revisionist and highly controversial view of Japanese history. On Yushukan's website,

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<sup>102</sup> See Appendix V.

<sup>103</sup> The Yasukuni Shrine controversially regards these war criminals as the "Martyrs of Showa". It further asserts that they were "cruelly and unjustly tried as war criminals by a sham-like tribunal of the Allied forces (United States, England, the Netherlands, China and others)." See the Yasukuni Shrine official website: <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/>.

it claims, “The truth of modern Japanese history is now restored.” However, it refers to Japanese invasion of China as the “China Incident” and the Pacific front of the Second World War as “the Great East Asia War”, in which, it argues, Japan was forced to fight self-defensively<sup>104</sup>. It is arguable that the shrine and its revisionist museum focus purely on Japan’s loss in the war, but neglecting the fact of Japan being the perpetrator for the war and the sufferings it caused to other neighbouring countries (Breen, 2005). From China’s perspective, therefore, the Yasukuni Shrine together with its affiliated Yushukan symbolise Japanese militarism, which inflicted enormous pain and suffering to the Chinese People some sixty years ago. It sees the Yasukuni Shrine as a place glorifies Japanese militarism, beautifies Japanese aggressions, and distorts the history of the Second World War (WWII).

During his prime ministership, Koizumi paid annual homage in his official capacity to the shrine, in spite of fierce condemnations from the Chinese government and people. For China, Koizumi’s persistence had offended the Chinese people by showing a total disrespect to their feeling (中国人民的感情). Due to the deep-rooted memories of Japanese atrocities in the war, history has been the most critical issue to Sino-Japanese relations since 1982. Prior to 2005, Beijing had already repeatedly reminded Koizumi and the Japanese government the importance of Japan’s attitude toward history in maintaining healthy bilateral relations. Two phrases were frequently used to convey this point, namely 前事不忘，后事之师 (the past, if not forgotten, may serve a guild to the future); and 以史为鉴，面向未来 (taking history as a mirror and

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<sup>104</sup> See the Yushukan official website, <http://www.yasukuni.jp/~yusyukan/index.html> (Japanese), and [http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/yasuhtml\\_english/yusyu.html](http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/yasuhtml_english/yusyu.html) (English).

looking forward to the future).<sup>105</sup> China saw Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine as an appeasement or even an endorsement to the glorification of militarism, and the revisionist view on history. Therefore, on every occasion, the CCP central government together with state-controlled media flooded with criticism. At official level, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) delivered its usual critical remarks by the spokesperson at routine press conference. In the meantime, the CCP's mouth piece (喉舌) Xinhua News Agency and *People's Daily* published strong worded editorials and commentaries on the issue.

Koizumi's stubbornness on the Yasukuni Shrine issue led to a growing sense of discontent and distrust in Chinese public and the government. Koizumi was deemed as a "bad person from his bones" (从骨子里坏的人). This is a very important belief in Chinese culture, according to one prominent Japan expert in China (Interview C, 2009). Once a person is deemed "bad" then everything he/she does would be viewed through critical lens, explained by the scholar, "Chinese thinking on this is heavily influenced by a Confucian legal concept of conviction by the intention (原心定罪). It judges a person whether guilty or not by the intention from his/her heart" (Interview C, 2009). This means if one's intention is morally unacceptable, one shall be punished severely regardless actual outcome. On the other hand, if one's intention is morally right, then even if a crime was committed, one shall be shown leniency. By paying visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, and disregarding the controversy, Koizumi was deemed to have a morally wrong intention, thus he was guilty and very much disliked by the

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<sup>105</sup> Two phrases have been widely used in many official statements, documents, speeches and messages in regards to Japan. See a selection: 'the congratulatory message from Premier Zhu Rongji of the PRC State Council to Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Normalisation of China-Japan Relations', (29 Sept. 2002), 'Some Sensitive Issues' (08 May 2002), and 'Hu Jintao's Speech the Celebratory Banquet for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Normalisation and of China-Japan Relations', Yu (2002).



Chinese public. As a result, unless he had stopped doing the “morally wrong action”—visiting Yasukuni Shrine, then whatever Koizumi did, it could only strengthen the negative perceptions of him in China (Interview C, 2009).

Along with the long lingering Yasukuni Shrine issue, which led to the 1985 anti-Japanese protests, sentiment also heightened when Japan approved a new version of revisionist history textbook in early 2005. The textbook was authored by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (JSHTR), a group of conservative scholars promoting a revisionist view of Japanese history.<sup>106</sup> The controversial textbook, published by Fusosha, did not mention the “Nanjing Massacre” in the main text, only referred to “Nanjing Incident” in footnotes. The textbook also did not give the number of victims, which is estimated between 250,000 and 300,000.<sup>107</sup> Instead it just briefly stated “Chinese military and civilian population suffered many casualties to Japanese military” (JSHTR, 2005: 49). In response, Beijing voiced its strong disapproval via diplomatic channels. The Chinese Ambassador at the time, Wang Yi visited the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Yachi Shotaro to protest what he described as an alteration of historical facts in the textbook. “It damages the public sentiment of Asian nations who were victims [of Japan’s aggression].” Wang was quoted telling Yachi, “it also negatively affects Japan’s image in international society” (Cited in Nakamura, 2005). By approving this controversial textbook for the second time, the Japanese government was seen as whole promoting the revisionist approach to history issues. Hence, serious questions about Japan’s attitude towards the wartime history were raised by people in China and several other Asian countries. As the next section

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<sup>106</sup> See the objectives on which the society advocates, [http://www.tsukurukai.com/02\\_about\\_us/01\\_opinion.html](http://www.tsukurukai.com/02_about_us/01_opinion.html). Accessed 01/04/2011.

<sup>107</sup> For more details on the Nanking Massacre, see Princeton University Nanjing Massacre site: <http://www.princeton.edu/~nanking/> Accessed 2/04/2011.

will show, the main reason cited against Japan's bid to become a permanent member in the UNSC was Tokyo's questionable attitude towards historical issues.

As discussed in previous chapters, Chinese popular nationalism generally reacts to events in current affairs. Japan, due to its association and unsolved issues relating to its wartime history, has emerged as the prime target for Chinese popular nationalism since the end of the Cold War, thanks to the pride/humiliation discourse. Therefore, as the Sino-Japanese political relations continued to deteriorate prior to 2005, the anti-Japanese sentiment in Chinese public had already been simmering for several years. Even small seemingly unrelated event could trigger strong nationalist response. For example, less than a year earlier in summer 2004, China hosted the Asia Cup finals, a continental football competition that is equivalent to the European Football Championships. Throughout the finals, Chinese fans had taunted the Japanese team and cheered for whoever they played against. Anti-Japanese banners and flags were displayed at every Japan participated match. Ironically, despite the close attention on the Japanese team by Chinese fans, their own team actually had a very good tournament by reaching the final for the first time in 20 years. And the final was against Japan. Chinese authorities, wary of potential troubles, mounted a massive security operation by deploying more than 5000 police and security agents to the streets close to the stadium. As expected, Chinese fans turned out in numbers, waving anti-Japanese banners, burning Japanese flags, and singing patriotic songs. Japan's national anthem was drowned out by Chinese jeers, which continued whenever Japan had possession of the ball. However, despite the ultra hostile environment both inside and outside the stadium, Japan eventually won 3-1, ending China's dream of winning its first ever Asian Cup. As Japan celebrated inside the near-empty stadium after the

final whistle, the disappointing defeat sparked out deep-rooted historical resentment among Chinese fans. In spite of heavy security present, they hurled plastic bottles at Japanese supporters, shouted obscenities and even attacked a Japanese diplomat's car (Tabuchi, 2008). For Chinese fans, this match seemed to mean more than just football, as fans reportedly used the occasion to vent out their anger at Japan amid worsening political relations in recent years (*BBC News Online*, 2004).

As presented above, the 2005 anti-Japanese protests occurred against a backdrop of estrangement of bilateral political relations and a growing public discontent that had already led anti-Japanese nationalism to the brink of boiling point. This brewing nationalistic sentiment eventually boiled-over when Japan attempted to bid for a permanent seat along side with China in the UNSC reform proposal.

## **4.2 The Anti-Japanese Protest**

### **4.2.1 Japan's UNSC Bid**

For many years, the United Nations (UN) had been debating on possible reforms in order to face the new challenges after the end of the Cold War. The Security Council has been seen as a body in need of major restructure. Although four non-permanent seats were added in 1963, the composition of the permanent veto-wielding seats had not been altered since the establishment of the UN in 1945. The allocation of permanent seats was in principle based on the global power dynamics at the end of World War Two (WWII). The five major powers in the victorious Allies, namely the United States (US), Britain, France, China and Russia, were granted permanent member status, with each member given the rights to veto. Many believe this outdated composition, which gives far too much power in favour of the unclear-capable

Permanent 5, does not offer a balanced structure to adequately resolve the security challenges the world is facing today. For example, the UNSC was widely criticised for the failed handlings of the diplomatic row on the Iraq issue prior to the 2003 military intervention. The UNSC was criticised by both the supporters and opponents of the war. Whilst, the US and its allies were exasperated at the UNSC's failure to agree action against Saddam Hussein's regime, the opponents of the war were equally angry as the Security Council's failure to stop America from launching it regardless (*The Economist*, 2005d).

Fearing the UNSC sliding from a forum for resolving differences to a mere stage for acting them out, several attempts had been made by various states since the 1990s to expand the representations in the Council, but all of them met with stubbornness from one state or another amongst the Permanent 5. For example, Japan and Germany's bid for the permanent seats in the late 1990s met strong opposition from China and a group of nations dubbed the "Coffee Club", led by Italy, South Korea and Mexico.

In September 2004, amidst the then Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan's new initiative in finding a solution for the UNSC reform, a group of four nations (G4) containing Japan, Germany, India and Brazil began jointly campaigning to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members in the Council. The G4 nations all mutually supported one another for permanent seats to the UNSC, and their efforts had initially attracted support from about 120 UN member states (Weiss, 2008: 92-93).

By March 2005, discussions over the UNSC reform gathered new impetus when Annan published a report titled *In Larger Freedom*, setting out possible plans for a

comprehensive reform of the UNSC. In the report he acknowledges the general consensus by majority of states for a change in the UNSC's composition. He stated,

a change in the Council's composition is needed to make it more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of the geopolitical realities of today, and thereby more legitimate in the eyes of the world. Its working methods also need to be made more efficient and transparent (Annan, 2005: 42).

In the report, Annan outlined two models for Security Council's expansion. Model A would create six new permanent seats, with no veto being added, and three new two-year term non-permanent seats. Model B would provide no new permanent seat, but would create a new category of eight four-year renewable-term seats and one new two-year non-permanent and non-renewable seat (Annan, 2005: 43). As a new round of UN General Assembly meetings fast approaching on 6 April, the G4 members intensified their efforts to mobilise supports for their case in the UN. And it appears that their lobbying had yielded some early success.

On 19 March, during her trip in Japan, the then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced at a speech in Tokyo, that "through its hard work and unique quality, Japan has already earned a respected position amongst other nations", therefore the US "unambiguously support" a permanent seat for Japan on the UNSC (*Sina Net*, 2005a). Moreover, several days later, when Kofi Annan discussing about the regional imbalance of the UNSC at the press conference, he suggested those who contribute most to the UN financially, militarily and diplomatically should be given increased involvement in decision making. Given Japan's position as one of biggest financial contributors, Annan reportedly offered his support to Japan's application by saying,

“of course Japan would get one [permanent seat], as being in Asia [which was rather underrepresented]” (*Sina Net*, 2005b). It has been argued that these two heavy-weighted endorsements on Japan’s bid prompted fear among official and popular nationalists in China that “the G4 proposal might succeed in getting a two-third majority if put to a vote in the General Assembly” (Weiss, 2008: 96).

#### **4.2.2 Initial Media Reports and Online Petition**

On 2 March 2005, the official website of the *People’s Daily* reported a story about a global Internet petition against Japan’s bid for the UNSC permanent membership which had launched by overseas Chinese in Los Angeles in late February (Zhou, 2005). This news was soon reposted on many information web portals in China and across nationalist forums. Chinese netizens quick followed suit, as many web portal and Bullet Board System forums set up petition sites to collect online signatures for this global petition. These sites included China’s largest commercial web portals, such as *Sina*, *Sohu*, and *Netease*; and influential BBS forums such as *China918.net*, and *Tianya Club*. Within days, the petition managed to collect more than 400,000 signatures from Chinese netizens with numbers rapidly increasing (*Sina Net*, 2005c). On *Sina* site alone, the number of signatories reached a staggering 20 million when the petition ended in September 2005.<sup>108</sup>

Officially, the Chinese authority initially did not take an active role in the petition, nor did it attempt to close the petition on commercial websites. Nevertheless, when *Xinhua Net*, the official website of the Xinhua News Agency, joined the petition to

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<sup>108</sup> See <http://news.sina.com.cn/comment/index.shtml>. Accessed 03/04/2011.

“resolutely oppose to Japan’s bid for a permanent UNSC seat”,<sup>109</sup> it could be seen as a clear green light from the central government for the action. The MFA’s reflections on the mass public petition further reflected central government’s approval. Following Xinhua’s participation in the online petition, the spokesperson for the MFA, Liu Jianchao, had twice made positive comments on the petition. He dismissed the mass petition movement as anti-Japanese sentiment. In contrast, picking up the history textbook issue, he claimed the petition was a strong request for Japan to adopt a “correct and responsible attitude towards historical issues” (正确的, 负责任的态度), in order to earn trust from the Chinese public (*China News Network*, 2005a; and 2005b). The main reason for Chinese government to support the mass online petition was, explained by two senior researchers at Chinese Academic Social Sciences (CASS),

“China in principle did not want Japan to be granted a permanent seat in the UNSC, so that it could sit side-by-side with the Chinese (平起平坐) on the international stage...However, China had a genuine fear that as the G4’s proposal gaining more and more support, it might get the required number if it were put to vote in General Assembly in autumn...As a result, Beijing saw this mass petition as a great opportunity for the Chinese around the world lobbying for its position, as it knew it could play the population card and get a astronomical number of signatures to present its case at the forthcoming UN General Assembly meeting (Interview D, 2009).

It is worth stressing that although Beijing saw the mass petition not as an anti-Japanese nationalist movement, but a way to serve up a notice on Japan’s attitude on history, this study sees it the other way round. First, as discussed at length in Chapter

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<sup>109</sup> This is how Xinhua petition was titled, the original Chinese is 坚决反对日本入常. See [http://news.xinhuanet.com/forum/2005-04/04/content\\_2772116.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/forum/2005-04/04/content_2772116.htm). Accessed 04/04/2011.

Three, the strong anti-Japanese nationalistic rhetoric is rooted in the Chinese public as the most significant part of the constructed discourse on Chinese popular nationalism, a concept this thesis believes to be mutually constitutive to state-led nationalism, historic narratives, and China's contemporary Japan policy. In addition, against the backdrop of deteriorating relations between China and Japan, this nationalistic feeling was arguably already very strong at the time prior to the petition. Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that even though the petition itself on surface was to block Japan's bid, but the driving force behind the petition that had quickly received tens of millions of signature was the strong nationalistic rage against Japan.

On the petition issue, Beijing had made a careful calculation that by giving tacit consent to the online petition, the possible reward in achieving foreign policy objectives, namely undermining Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC, not only outweighed the potential risks in terms of public order, it also, according Weiss, "mitigate[s] the international reputation costs to the Chinese government of making an eventual veto threat" (2008: 88). Beijing's support of the online petition underlines the mutually constituted relations between domestic politics and foreign policy, outlined in Chapter One as it has demonstrated how domestic politics may be instrumentalised to serve foreign policy objectives under the dual-aspect setting—domestic and international sphere. Externally, Beijing's objective on this issue was inline with the desire of the petitioning public, namely to prevent Japan from gaining sufficient support for a permanent seat in the UNSC. Beijing saw the petition movement—a domestic source—could provide a sufficient input to China's lobbying in the UN negotiations. And indeed, the petition was used by Beijing to argue that overwhelming number of people both in China and abroad was opposing the Japan's



bid, thus the reform proposal required reconsideration (Weiss, 2008). Internally, being a body at least partly responsible to the construction of the popular nationalism discourse, the CCP government understands the deep-rooted anti-Japanese sentiment in Chinese popular nationalism. Given that the petition movement up to the end of March was mainly conducted online as opposed to on the street, so the risk of public disorder (nationalism being out of control) was deemed relatively low. Beijing's initial unconstrained attitude towards the media reports on this matter seems to reflect its belief that the petition movement in its current form did not pose a notable threat to social stability in China (Stockmann, 2011: 183). In short, not only was the petition movement regarded by Beijing offering potentially a convincing persuasion for the UNSC to block Japan's bid, domestically, it was seen as a relatively safe channel for the Chinese public to vent out nationalistic anger.

#### **4.2.3 From Street Petition to Full-Scale Protests**

After sensing the official approval and support, the petition movement eventually spread from online to the streets. Collections of actual signatures, as opposed to online registration, started on university campuses, the traditional hot bed for nationalist movement. Many universities first put up anti-Japan's bid banners (反日入常横幅) inside campuses for students to sign. Typically, the banner contained a slogan printed on a white fabric. Not only did the banners include slogans such as "resolutely against Japan joining the UNSC permanent membership"; "Crushing Japan's wild dream of permanent membership"; but some of them also contained angry messages on a wider range of issues in Sino-Japanese relations, such history textbook, and Japan's occupation of the Diaoyu Islands (*China Daily*, 2005). In late-March, students across China then spontaneously took these banners outside, and set

up signature collection points in cities and towns. In order to encourage people putting their names down, they shouted slogans to “educate” passerby from all walks of life of Japan’s intention in the UNSC and Japan’s revisionist approach to history (*Sina Net*, 2005d). The intention of these student-organised street petition was peaceful, not to cause any trouble. However, on 2 April, things went out of control in Chengdu, when a group of people gathered outside a Japanese supermarket, Ito Yokado, not far from a street petition point. The protest started with anti-Japanese slogans such as “Shut down Ito Yokado”, “boycott Japanese goods”, “Down with little Japan (小日本)”. The atmosphere gradually became more intense, the protest turned more physical with the windows of Ito Yokado smashed. When looking through archives in popular online news sites such as Sohu, Sina, and the official Xinhua News, no report of this violent protest was found, indicating strict information control being introduced by the government (Stockmann, 2011: 196-197). The reason for this, interpreted by a Chinese scholar, was that:

the central government needed time to assess this new development...As well as worries about anti-Japanese violence spreading domestically. The central government did not want to suppress public sentiment too much so the nationalist gun turned to the leaders. At the same time, in terms of its position on the UN reform, the government did not want to lose the momentum in terms of public pressure against Japan’s bid...So when all was unsure, the government simply directed the news not to be broadcasted, in order to give it some leeway (余地) (Interview A, 2009).

Here, the dynamics of nationalist protest had again made Beijing pondering between the two levels simultaneously. On the domestic level, the new violent protest, if spread out, could potentially cause large-scale social unrests. Moreover, if Beijing’s

management of popular anti-Japanese protests was perceived too heavy-handedly by the public, then the nationalistic anger may turn inwards and become criticism to the leadership. On the international level, if popular nationalism left unrestricted, it would no doubt tarnish Beijing's reputation on the international stage. Conversely, placing too much restraints on the popular anti-Japanese protests may lose some of the "public lobbying" effects that had been gathered for Beijing in the early mass petitions.

On the weekend of 9 April 2005, following Japan's approval of the highly controversial history textbook on 5 April, street petition against Japan's bid on UNSC finally erupted into full-scale spontaneous anti-Japanese protests in several cities in China (Stockmann, 2011: 183; He, 2007: 22; and Weiss, 2008: 104-105). For example, in Beijing, the protests started in the Zhongguancun (中关村) District, dubbed as the Chinese Silicon Valley. The district is surrounded by many top universities, including the most prestigious two in China, Peking and Tsinghua. As protesters gathered, the group took a detour to pass several close-by universities, asking students to join. As a result, the number expanded quickly, and soon reached more than 10,000. Protests then moved towards the Japanese Embassy, picking up passerby as they walked. Along the way, angry nationalist protesters smashed Japanese restaurants, damaged business establishments, including office of All Nippon Airlines and Tokyo-Mitsubishi Bank, and overturned Japanese cars. Interestingly, as well as singing patriotic songs, and shouting derogatory remarks against the Japanese, such as "Kill the Japanese Devils", "Death to Koizumi the pig", protesters were also keen to make their action legitimate by chanting "Patriotism is innocent!" (爱国无罪) and "Never forget national humiliation" (勿忘国耻). Additionally, protesters threw rocks, water bottles, eggs at the Japanese Embassy, in

front of heavy security presence. At the weekend, similar scenes to these in Beijing were repeated in Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Wuhan, Guangzhou, and many other cities across China. Furthermore, smaller scale anti-Japanese demonstrations took place in subsequent weekends until the end of April 2005.

### **4.3 Assessment on Beijing's Responses**

#### **4.3.1 Domestic Responses**

The first observation shall be made is that although no public announcement was ever made on the issue, during these mass anti-Japanese protests, as noted by Weiss (2008), a large contingent of police and security personnel had always followed the nationalist protesters. Japanese diplomatic establishments always had heavy security presence. This only meant one thing; the central government had closely monitored the online and mobile phone message exchanges among popular nationalists. Beijing seemed to be fully aware about the time, place, potential routes and targets, hence was able to allocate sufficient police force accordingly. Given Beijing's pre-event preparation for police deployment, it appeared that the central government had given its tacit consent (默许) for the public demonstrations at the weekend of 9 April.

The second observation drawing from the case is, despite heavy security presence, actions of vandalism by popular nationalists, which would be illegal in China, were not effectively stopped by security forces. By comparison, road and barrier blocks surrounding Japanese diplomatic establishments were strictly enforced, with Japanese diplomats in Beijing being informed by the Chinese police about the upcoming public protest (Weiss, 2008: 105). During the demonstrations, on many occasions, police just

watched protesters smashing windows, destroying shops, and overturning cars (Kahn, 2005). Without access to the inner circles of the CCP in Zhongnaihui (中南海), my interpretation to this strange action is based on the effects of popular nationalism dynamics at domestic level.

Adopting a pressure cooker analogy and taking a constructivist approach, popular nationalism here is seen as the steam in the pressure cooker, constantly being constructed by both foreign policy and domestic politics. Beijing as the chef, has two mechanisms to control the inner pressure, namely the heat control for the hob and the valve regulator on the pressure cooker. The hob represents the original source of nationalist pressure, which can be frictions with a nationalist external target, Japanese government's perceived attitude to historic issues, and Japan's bid for the permanent membership in the UNSC in this case. Valve regulator determines how much nationalist steam is allowed to escape. It represents tactical actions to manage popular nationalism, such as information restriction and crowd management. Too much and too little popular nationalism in today's China would both lead to serious domestic problems, namely social unrests, as analysed in Chapter Two. By turning a blind eye to some acts of vandalism, Beijing was able to let some steam vented out (泄愤) from the nationalist pressure cooker. And by enforcing a strict crowd control along the pre-designated demonstration route, Beijing at least had managed to contain the movement of nationalists. This would enable the pressure to be released at the required rate so it would not pose serious risks to both domestic social stability and foreign policy accomplishment.

However, a series of emergency meetings were conducted by the government with senior university staff in the evening of 9 April 2005, suggesting that outcomes of the protests did not make happy reading for the CCP leaders. At the meetings, instructions were issued to university staff to prevent university students from taking part in future public protests (Weiss, 2008: 106). Although, heavy police presence was in place that weekend, the sheer number of protests spontaneously turned up in so many cities still came as a shock for the central government (Interview B, 2009; and Interview C). Thus, after that weekend, the central government swiftly implemented another valve control tactic, namely information restriction (Stockmann, 2011).

Despite many of the world media running news coverage on the events at the weekend of 9 April,<sup>110</sup> nothing of the event was mentioned about in Chinese media, including official and commercial online news portals. Stockmann notes,

After the first demonstration in Beijing took place on 9 April...space for news reporting closed. The Propaganda Department prohibited coverage of the protests and in order to subdue them instructed the media to keep news reporting close to the government line. (Stockmann, 2011: 183-184).

On *Sina Net* (新浪网), the largest Chinese language information portal, there is a special report micro site created in 2005 dedicating for the Japan's bid on the UNSC permanent membership. Nevertheless, no words about the public anti-Japanese protests appear in the news titles under the tap of "Japan seeking a permanent seat" (日本谋求常任理事国席位). Only public online and street petitions were reported

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<sup>110</sup> See for example, *The Economist* (2005)

until early April.<sup>111</sup> The focus of report was generally on either other countries' stance on the issue, or on Japan's lobbying efforts. This seems to confirm Stockmann's observation that new information guidelines were put in place in China, in the wake of the 9 April protests. In addition, the central government appeared to have also tightened up police control on the streets. For instance, a fresh round of protest marches was effectively prevented on 17 April, when the strong police presence at a meeting point in Beijing intimidated protesters (Stockmann, 2011: 183).

The final valve control tactic employed internally by the central government was guidance and persuasion, to channel the negative anti-Japanese sentiment into positive energy elsewhere. In order to prevent university students joining protest marches again, as well as asking lecturers and tutors to monitor students' movement, the authority also directed university staff to talk with students, according to one Beijing-based IR scholar (Interview A, 2009). This was aimed at assessing their status of mind, and persuading them to keep away from the protests. More professionally perhaps, the government also arranged Japan experts, foreign policy specialist, and retired diplomats to hold seminars across nation's campuses, hoping these experts might able to rationally reason with students on the ideas of public protest and boycotting Japanese goods. Furthermore, students were also able to ask any questions concerning about Japan, or issues relating to Japan and Sino-Japanese relations, to which these policy experts would made better answers and rational explanations. This tactic of rationalising and reasoning with the students, dubbed as "massage of the senses" (理性按摩) among Chinese IR academics, was first introduced during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, and since has become an increasingly popular valve-

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<sup>111</sup> See <http://news.sina.com.cn/z/unnation/1.shtml>. Accessed 05/04/2011.

control choice for the government to ease the nationalistic steam (Interview A, 2009; Interview D, 2009; and Interview E, 2009).

#### **4.3.2 International Reactions**

The above measures adopted by the CPP leaders could only temporarily alter the rate of which nationalistic steam was released from the public pressure cooker. It could not nevertheless, stabilise the popular nationalist rage for a longer period. To achieve this, Beijing had to tackle the source of the heat, namely Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC. This section evaluates how Beijing managed to turn down the nationalist heat at the international level. It argues that during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, China adopted a tough stance at international level in order to achieve its goal of preventing Japan from gaining a permanent seat in the UNSC.

Responding to the mass anti-Japanese nationalist protests of 9 April, the MFA appeared rather hawkish at least on the surface. This was reflected in spokesperson two regular press conferences on 12 April, and on 14 April. On both occasions, as expected, when questions on the protests were asked, spokesperson Liu Jianzhao replied them with a unified hard-line response:

These protests and demonstration are spontaneous public response to Japan's wrong attitude and actions towards its past history...we do not support isolated irrational behaviour...however, Japan is fully aware of the cause for the current status in Sino-Japanese relations. Japan should carefully rethink (认真反省) [its attitude and actions] (MFA, 2005).



This official response blamed the cause for the anti-Japanese protests and riots squarely on Japan. Therefore, it asserted only Japan could reduce nationalistic sentiment in China by reconsidering the issues on the UNSC reform and the history textbook approval.

Furthering to MFA's position, Premier Wen Jiabao publically announced on 12 April that China would oppose Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC: "Only a country that respects history, takes responsibility for the past, and wins over the trust of the people of Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community" (Cited in *China News Network*, 2005c).

The tension between China and Japan was slightly loosened when Koizumi "held out an olive branch to China" on 18 April, saying he was willing to have a civil meeting with his counterpart after Beijing refused to apologise for violent anti-Japanese protests. He explained his reason, "It is better not to make it an exchange of accusations...it is necessary to think about not fuelling confrontation. The meeting should be future oriented. We should consider how we can promote friendly ties" (AFP, 2005).

China seemed to have accepted Koizumi's olive branch. The central government quickly began to concentrate its efforts to bring an end to the current wave of anti-Japanese movement. On 21 April, two important piece of information was published on the official *Xinhua News* site. The first is an editorial titled "Consciously act according the law, maintaining overall stability". The editorial, whilst understanding the anti-Japanese sentiment from the public, asked the public to abide the law, and act

sensibly, in order to maintain an overall social stability. It reminded the public that promoting social harmony and stability was every citizen's duty. Finally, it called for turning the patriotic passion into hard work (*Xinhua News*, 2005a). The second piece of information was a declaration by the Public Security Bureau. It warned that vandalisms taking place in recent anti-Japanese protests were illegal actions, which, if reoccurred, would be punished in future. In addition, it reminded the public that unauthorised protest, slogan, banner, and public gathering remain prohibited by the Chinese law (*Xinhua News*, 2005b). These two official announcements were seen as CCP's determination to end the month-long anti-Japanese movement (Fu, 2005; and Interview A, 2009).

China's repeated blamed Japan for causing the mass public protests appeared to be a tactic of "playing public opinion card". The hidden message of this claim was that the Chinese public is too angry for the issues to be resolved by Beijing alone. By asserting Japan's irresponsible actions caused this nationalist outrage, Beijing attempted to convince Tokyo that Japan was the only party who could fundamentally solve this problem. This is based on ancient Chinese belief, "the knot can only be untied by the person who tied it" (解铃还需系铃人). However, it was actually the US who helped to untie this nationalist "knot". Following the public protests on 9 April which had caused considerable damage to Japanese business and diplomatic establishments in Beijing, the US stance on Japan's bid appeared to have made a U-turn, indicating that Japan's bid was unlikely to succeed. On 13 April, referring to the anti-Japanese protests in China, the incoming US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton stated that it would be "politically very difficult to make any change in the composition of the permanent membership," against the backdrop of the "things that

were going on in China over the weekend, combined with public statements made by senior Chinese officials [referring to Premier Wen's public statement opposing Japan's candidacy a day earlier]" (cited in Weiss, 2008: 107). John Bolton's statement could not be further away from Secretary of State Rice's "unambiguous support" offered to Japan only a month earlier. With Beijing persistent persuasions, the US eventually voiced an objection to Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council membership in early June 2005 (Takahara, 2005).

Without access to Beijing's foreign policy decision-making body, it is difficult to accurately ascertain reasons for China's diplomatic hard-line approach to the Japan's UNSC bid and the subsequent anti-Japanese protests. However, by looking closely the interactions between Beijing's management of the issues at domestic and international level, the compiling circumstantial evidence suggests that the pressures of domestic nationalist opinion had both helped and influenced Beijing's handling of the issue at international level. Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC came at a time when Sino-Japanese relations were at a the worst point for many years, cumulated by diplomatic rows over Koizumi's Yasukuni Shrine visits, history text-book controversies amongst other issues. Adopting the constructive approach outlined in Chapter One, it is arguable the deterioration in bilateral relations would have constituted the rise of anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiment among the Chinese public prior to the April protests. When UN reform negotiations reached a critical phase in March 2012, so too did the popular nationalist pressure against Japan. As a result, fearing this pressure could get out of control, thus threaten domestic stability, Beijing had little choice but to use various 'valve control' mechanisms allowing the public to release some nationalist steam.

On the international level, because foreign policy directions are rooted in beliefs and perceptions of the decision makers, which in turn are shaped by subjective meaning from domestic sources, popular nationalism discourse in this case. Domestic sources thus provide both inputs and constraints to foreign policy, according to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). In this case, as outlined above, the belief and perception of the decision makers in Beijing was that Japan should not be given a permanent seat in the UNSC. With the public's consensus strongly agreeing to Beijing's stance, the online petition against Japan's candidacy and subsequent public anti-Japanese protests had offered 'inputs' in foreign policy decision-making, reinforcing Beijing's stance at international stage. Nonetheless, when foreign policy objective (generate enough support to delay UN reform negotiation) was achieved, anti-Japanese protest lost its instrumental value – inputs – in foreign policy, and became a constraint for domestic politics, the Chinese government quickly deployed mechanisms such as media blackout, to contain the popular nationalist pressure. The actions and interactions between Beijing, the Chinese public and foreign governments during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests have demonstrated the mutually constitutive relations between popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has focussed on the large-scale anti-Japanese movement in China between March and April 2005. By following the developments on both the anti-Japanese nationalist aspect, and Beijing's handling of the nationalist pressure, the chapter has been able to interpret how popular nationalist opinion has influenced Beijing domestic and foreign decision-makings.

Initially, Beijing fully supported the online mass petition opposing Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC. I argue that Beijing was convinced that by playing the public opinion card—allowing mass online petitions, not only would it strengthen its own stance on Japan's bid on international level, it would also safely vent some nationalist rage that had been building up for years.

When online petition turned into full-scale protests. On domestic level, I argue, Beijing's approach was more cautious than in the petition phase, as it was seeking to maintain a delicate balance of maintaining a steady but stable nationalist steam from the public. To achieve this, as I analysed, Beijing had to constantly adjust the steam release rate by adopting various valve control tactics, including tacit consent, strict crowd control, media blackout, and “massage of the senses”.

On international level, however, Beijing's posture was less flexible. My explanation for this is: For Beijing, the main foreign policy objective in this issue was preventing Japan becoming a permanent member in the Security Council. Consequently, by standing firm with popular nationalists, it gave Beijing a secure platform on which history issues could be cited as the reason for opposing Japan's bid. In addition, I believe, the gradual deterioration of China-Japan bilateral relations prior to the 2005 anti-Japanese had build nationalist pressure so strong that Beijing's stance on the UNSC issue was simply less readily negotiable. By the same token, Beijing was left with no much leeway to domestically suppress anti-Japanese popular nationalism.

Now, it is the time moves to the second case study, namely the Diaoyu Islands Dispute between China and Japan. In this case, I will explore another, much more recent anti-Japanese movement in China during a diplomatic stalemate with Japan. It will be interesting to see whether the dynamics of popular nationalism in this case operate differently.

## Chapter Five: The Diaoyu Islands Dispute

The Diaoyu Islands, or Senkaku Islands in Japanese, are the collective name for a set of five uninhabited islets and three barren rocks in the East China Sea (ECS), with the largest islet named Diaoyutai. The island group is located approximately midway between the island of Taiwan and Yonaguni Island, Okinawa Prefecture, the southernmost and westernmost island of the Japanese Ryukyu Islands; it is approximately 174 nautical miles east of coast of mainland China<sup>112</sup> (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 124; Liu, 1996: 13; and Su, 2005: 46). Notwithstanding the uninhabitability of the islands, it is the geographic location of the Diaoyu Islands, and the potential resources available in the surrounding area that have triggered a three-way dispute over its sovereignty among China, Taiwan and Japan, although, China sees it as a dispute with Japan only, since it regards Taiwan as an integral part of its sovereignty. Critically, the sovereignty question over Taiwan is the essential element in Beijing's claim on Diaoyu Islands.<sup>113</sup>

This chapter uses the Diaoyu Islands dispute as a case to demonstrate the mutual constitutive assumption between nationalism, domestic politics and foreign policy. The chapter begins with a discussion of both the strategic and economic values that the Diaoyu Islands possess for China. It looks into the strong nationalistic emotions with which the dispute has been attached. More importantly, the chapter presents how the islands dispute is well placed at the centre of the conceptualisation of nationalism in post-Cold War China. The actual case coming under close scrutiny is the 2010 boat

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<sup>112</sup> For a geographic illustration see Appendix VI: Maps of Diaoyu Islands and the disputed area in the East China Sea.

<sup>113</sup> More on this will be discussed later.

collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese patrol boats near the Diaoyu Islands, and the subsequent diplomatic stand-off. By studying the interactions between Beijing and Tokyo, and between Chinese government and its popular nationalists during the incident, the chapter critically assesses the level of nationalist influence on Beijing actions towards Japan.

## **5.1 Strategic Value**

Because of its vital geographic position as the frontline outpost for China and the last post of the rear guard for Japan, the strategic value of the Diaoyu Islands in military and geopolitics cannot be underestimated.

For China, the Diaoyu Islands situated right at the centre of what Chinese strategists call “the first island chain”, defined by a line of islands tightly surrounded China’s coastal water stretching from Kurile Islands, Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, through Taiwan, to the Philippines and the Spratly Islands. This chain of islands separates China coastal waters and the vast Pacific Ocean, is seen as a natural barrier restricting Chinese naval power projection beyond its shore. From China’s strategic rivals’ perspective, some see that “the first island chain” is a kind of “Great Wall in reverse:...a well-organised line of US allies that serve as a sort of guard tower to monitor and possibly block China’s access to the Pacific Ocean” (Kaplan, 2010: 33). Increasingly, Chinese military, especially the navy, has been conducting a series of modernization programme in both hardware and strategic doctrine, in order to match



its rapidly risen economic and political status.<sup>114</sup> There appears to be a growing perception in the West that with improved economic and military capabilities, China is more willing to flex its muscles farther away from its coastal waters by developing a “blue water” navy<sup>115</sup> (*The Economist*, 2007; 2009; and 2010b). Beijing’s decision to send a rotating naval anti-piracy task force to the coast off Somalia demonstrated this increasing power-projection capability of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) navy. The vital strategic importance of the Diaoyu Islands is that by controlling the island group, it would “break” the “first island chain” and provide a secure gateway to the deep and vast Pacific Ocean, hence extending Beijing’s sea defence perimeter deep into the Western Pacific. Access to the Diaoyu Islands would be particularly useful for the Chinese submarine force, as it would allow submarines to plunge much deeper in the waters east of the islands,<sup>116</sup> hence becoming more difficult for the United States (US) and Japan to track their route before slipping into the unrestricted Pacific Ocean. As an indication of the increasing ambition and confidence in PLA’s submarine force,<sup>117</sup> a US top admiral disclosed in 2006 that a Chinese submarine surprised the US Navy and risked setting off a military confrontation by closely shadowing a US aircraft carrier sailing in the ECS and surfacing within the torpedo-firing range of the carrier (Scarborough, 2006).

The Diaoyu Islands offer the same strategic importance to Japan. First, by maintaining the de facto control of the islands, Japan has been able to conduct regular

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<sup>114</sup> On Chinese recent military modernization, see *The Economist* (2010a).

<sup>115</sup> For analyses on China’s efforts to build up a “blue water” navy, see Cole (2001: 138-178); You and You (1991); You (1997); and Wortzel (1994).

<sup>116</sup> Geographic surveys of the ocean floor show the big difference in depth between the water west of Taiwan (i.e. the Taiwan Strait and East China Sea), and the sea east of it. The Okinawa Trough lays just to the south and southwest of the Diaoyu Islands (Liu, 1996: 13; and Ji, 1995).

<sup>117</sup> Erickson et. al. (2007) offers a comprehensive and up-to-dated study on China’s current and future submarine force.

patrols in the water surrounding it, thus is able to force any perceived intruders out of the area, and prevent anyone from attempting the land on the disputed islands. There are numerous occasions, in which patrol boats from Japanese Coast Guard (JCG), ships and planes from the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) have intercepted fishing boats and military activities in proximity of the Diaoyu Islands, including several collisions.<sup>118</sup> These incidents are always the flash points in the territorial disputes. They, as will be demonstrated in the studies of the most recent case in September 2010, have detrimental effects on Sino-Japanese relations and Chinese popular nationalism. Second, due to its relative close proximity to the airspace and maritime boundary of Taiwan and China, The islands and the sky above are ideal for Japan to carry out surveillance and intelligence gathering about movements of PLA planes and ships. Tokyo's recent decision to deploy troops permanently based on the Yonaguni Island, Japan's westernmost point and the closest undisputed territory to the Diaoyu Islands, illustrates the critical strategic value of the area (AFP<sup>119</sup>, 2010a).

## 5.2 Economic Value

Apart from the vital strategic importance, the Diaoyu Islands also possess great economic values for both claimants. Although the disputes have always existed since the end of World War Two (WWII), Suganuma argues that until the 1970s, the islands were regarded of little value to either China or Japan (2000: 11). It is in fact only after the discovery of potential abundant natural resources under these islands in

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<sup>118</sup> It is not only China, but boats from Taiwan and Hong Kong have also had frictions with Japanese patrol vessels. On 10 June 2008, a Taiwanese fishing boat was hit and subsequently sunk by a Japanese frigate. This caused major diplomatic difficulties between Taiwan and Japan. For more details see news reports, *The China Post* (2008), and *BBC Chinese* (2008).

<sup>119</sup> Agence France-Presse.

later 1960s did the dispute of ownership over them “ignite the fuse of territorial confrontations between Japan and China”, and the ownership of these uninhabited islands has become “one of the most complicated territorial disputes in the world” (Suganuma, 2000: 11).

A series of surveys on the area around the Diaoyu Islands conducted in the late 1960s concluded that the seafloor between Taiwan and Japan in the ECS might potentially contain one of the most prolific oil and gas reservoirs in the world.<sup>120</sup> Naturally, these surveys attracted great attention from Taiwan, China and Japan, with all three sides reaffirming their claims over the area, in order to explore the potential considerable oil and gas deposit, and authorise drilling rights.<sup>121</sup> For China and Japan, potentially huge oil and gas resources right at their doorstep were certainly very welcome news back then in the 1970s. As both economies develop, especially with China’s rapid growth since the 1980s, this oil and gas field becomes even more invaluable for both sides as China increases its energy consumption and its dependence to imported oil, and Japan’s lack of natural resources. Consequently, in recent years, there appears to be a rise in bilateral confrontations over the disputed area in the ECS.<sup>122</sup> The dispute in the ECS centres on the way the maritime border between China and Japan should be drawn, and the consequent overlapping Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).<sup>123</sup> It is reasonable to say that the discovery of oil and gas in the seabed placed the Diaoyu Islands dispute at the centre of a dispute in much wider context, hence intensifying the

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<sup>120</sup> For detailed findings, see Suganuma (2000: 129-131).

<sup>121</sup> For the reactions to the discovery of oil and gas reservoir and the earliest analyses on the legal ownership of the disputed area of the ECS, see Allen and Mitchell (1972), and Cheng (1974).

<sup>122</sup> For a detailed account on the recent development in the ECS disputes and negotiations, see Valencia (2007), and Drifte (2008).

<sup>123</sup> The EEZ is an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, in which the coastal state has the sovereign rights to explore and manage the natural resources, and conduct marine scientific research in the zone. It can extend up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. See The United Nations (1982: 40-49).

competition between China and Japan for the sovereignty over several uninhabitable rocks in the sea (Valencia, 2007: 128; and Onishi and French, 2005).

### 5.3 Emotional Value

Both China and Japan based their claim over the Diaoyu Islands on a great amount of historical evidence supporting their own arguments. This section discusses China's historic basis for sovereignty claim over the islands. More important, the section also investigates the strong emotional attachment amongst the Chinese public to the claim. As this study focuses on Chinese nationalism and Beijing's policy and action toward Tokyo, and since the study is not the ownership debate *per se*,<sup>124</sup> it therefore will mainly concentrate on China's stance and position on the Diaoyu Islands issue. Nonetheless, this should not be seen as dismissing the credibility of Japan's claim, nor should it be regarded as promoting China's perspectives.

To put simply, the foundation of China's claim over the Diaoyu Islands is that China had, according to historical documents, first discovered, named the island group and since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) mapped out as a navigational post. Although Chinese archives show that the islands were under its administrative rule as early as the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), the islands had never been permanently habited, were merely used in shipping charts (Suganuma, 2000: 42-44). Nevertheless, using the evidence above as the basis, Beijing repeatedly proclaims that the Diaoyu Islands group has always been China's "sacred territory since ancient times" (*People's Daily English*, 2003; and *China Daily*, 2010a).

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<sup>124</sup> For a very good and balanced study on the ownership claims over the islands from a historical perspective, including analyses of historical records and maps, see Suganuma (2000).

The main reason for strong nationalist emotion attachment to the claim is that Diaoyu Islands dispute presenting a prime illustration of the “pride/humiliation” discourse that, as discussed in Chapter Two, characterises modern Chinese identity and fuels popular nationalism. According to Beijing’s narratives, the Diaoyu Islands group (as part of Taiwan) was taken away from China after China’s defeat in First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), initiated by Japan. The war broke out at the height of the “Century of Humiliation”, when the Qing Dynasty was in its terminal decline, whilst Japan was boosting its power following the Meiji Restoration.

The island of Taiwan provides the critical element from which China’s claim on the Diaoyu Islands archipelago is constructed. Beijing argues that these islands, together with Taiwan, should have been returned to China at the end of WWII, under the Cairo Declaration of 1943.<sup>125</sup> The Cairo Declaration stated that Japan ought to return all the territories “stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa [Taiwan], and the Pescadores, shall be stored to the Republic of China (ROC)” (The Cairo Declaration, 1943). The islands were not specified in the Cairo Declaration, though both Beijing and Taipei would argue that it did not need to, as they were not listed in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, when Japan took them as islets of Taiwan. Conversely, the Diaoyu Islands were not returned to the ROC with Taiwan after the Japanese surrender, but taken over by the US occupying force in Japan as part of Okinawa archipelago, and used by US military for target practices. The islands were eventually returned as parts of Okinawa island group to Japan in 1972 when the US ended its post-war control of

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<sup>125</sup> The defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War resulted signing of what China calls as, an unequal treaty: the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, in which stated annexation of the Island of Formosa (Taiwan) and all its subsidiary islands (including the Diaoyu Islands). Japan soon placed the Diaoyu Islands into Okinawa Prefecture (Suganuma, 2000: 117-119).

Okinawa. Initially, between 1945 and early 1970s, at the height of their own bitter power struggle, neither the Kuomintang (KMT) nor the subsequent Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government voiced its strong objection against the US control or the handover to Japan. Nor did the two sides lodge any meaningful declaration over the islands' sovereignty before 1970.<sup>126</sup> Consequently, it is reasonable to articulate that what has made this dispute much more complicated is its close connections to the Taiwan sovereignty question and the involvements of the United States, as Beijing argues that the islands, belonging to "Taiwan Province", which has been an integral part of China's territory. The fact that neither Beijing nor Taipei currently administers the islands, makes many Chinese feel that China was unjustly deprived the rightful ownership of an essential part of its territory (Taira, 2004). It is as if the territory was forcibly taken away from China, and was not rightfully returned as it should have when China finally defeated Japan.

Officially, while Beijing has never given up territorial claims over the islands, aiming at seeking to improve the diplomatic ties between China and Japan, Deng Xiaoping, Vice-Premier at the time, suggested in 1978 two countries to agree, "shelve bilateral disputes, and seek common development" (搁置争议, 共同开发). On Deng's recommendations, China claims that both countries abided by this consensus and worked to develop bilateral relations for many subsequent years (*China Daily*, 2010). Conversely, Tokyo's stance on, what Japan call the Senkaku Islands, has been that there exists no issue of territorial dispute to be resolved concerning the archipelago. The earliest traceable such statement from the Japanese official is in 1996 at a regular press conference held by the Japanese foreign ministry (MOFA). When asked about a

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<sup>126</sup> For a more detailed presentation on the historical confusion and complication of the dispute, see Taira (2004).

reported lighthouse construction by a rightist group on one of the islands, the Press Secretary explained Japan's fundamental position on the islands, "It is clear, historically and in light of international law, that the Senkaku Islands form an integral part of Japanese territory. The Islands are under the effective control of Japan. There does not exist any territorial issue regarding the Senkaku Islands" (MOFA, 1996).<sup>127</sup> Emotionally for the Chinese therefore, one is not difficult to envisage that Japan's denial of the very existence of a sovereign dispute only adds more nationalist spice into an already volatile mixture of the "pride/humiliation" complex.

Callahan argues "to understand the success of China's current rise, we need to understand the failures of China's "Century of Humiliation" (2010: 8). Emotionally, due to its historical connections with both wars that China had recently fought against Japan, and Japan's failure to promptly return the territory, the Diaoyu Islands issue has naturally attracted a great deal of nationalistic sentiment in China. The dispute sits at the middle in the "pride/humiliation" complex of Chinese nationalism. On the one hand, the islands group is presented as a potent symbol of Chinese nation being the victim at the hands of Japanese aggression, and the enormous suffering Chinese nation had endured. Therefore, Japan's continuous rejection on China's claim and restriction on Chinese access to the islands, bring out the fury of anti-Japanese nationalist movement. On the other hand, as China's international profile rises, Chinese public now proudly feel their nation is strong enough to demand for the return to its "rightful place on the world stage".<sup>128</sup> Thus, regaining "lost territories", including Taiwan and Diaoyu Islands, should be an imperative step to achieve this

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<sup>127</sup> In response to the latest incident on the disputed islands, Japanese government reiterated its unchanged official position regarding the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands (MOFA, 2010). More on this in the following section.

<sup>128</sup> See *The Economist* (2010c) for an up-to-date special report on China's place in the world.

goal. In essence, the dispute perfectly illustrates, “rather than being opposites, in China, pride and humiliation are interwoven, separated only by a fine line and can easily trade places” (Callahan, 2010: 9). Due to this important symbolism the Diaoyu Islands dispute epitomises to Chinese nationalism, history and its perception towards Japan,<sup>129</sup> the dispute remains a sensitive issue that has been hotly debated in China-Japan relations among the government and the general public since the 1990s, coinciding with the apparent rise of Chinese popular nationalism.

## **5.4 “Defending Diaoyu Islands” Movements**

Whenever issues and events relating to the Diaoyu Islands dispute is reported in the media, it stirs up strong anti-Japanese nationalist sentiment amongst the general public in China. However, in terms of venting out nationalist passion, for most people at most of times, sharing angry messages and derogatory remarks on Japan in cyberspace is as far as it goes. Yet, there are three main non-governmental organisations (NGO) across the Great China (PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan) aimed at actively defending China sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands (保卫钓鱼岛 or 保钓). Namely, they are the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (CFDDI or 中国保卫钓鱼岛联合会) in mainland China, the Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (ACDDI or 保钓行动委员会) in Hong Kong, and The Chinese Association for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (CADDI or 中华保钓协会) in Taiwan. These NGOs<sup>130</sup> lead the way in terms of collaborating collective activities against

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<sup>129</sup> Mitter’s work (2000) on China’s War of Resistance Museum presents a good example on the importance of symbolism in Chinese nationalism and culture. See also Dittmer (1977), for a fine general discussion on political culture and symbolism,

<sup>130</sup> The CFDDI in mainland China is an unofficial social group, as registration of NGO in China needs to secure government support, and once registered NGOs remain under strong government’s management.



Japan's occupation of the islands, from organising street protests to funding for activists to sail up and make landings on Diaoyutai, the largest islet of the archipelago. The three NGOs maintain regular contact with one another through meetings to discuss current situation on the issue. The main activity for the NGOs is to coordinate trips to the disputed area as an act of protest or sovereignty declaration.<sup>131</sup> On the Diaoyu Islands dispute, despite the significant political differences between the PRC and Taiwan, their stances on the issue are the same, which is that ancient Chinese first discovered and administered the area; therefore, sovereignty over the islands group belongs to China—either the PRC for the Communist or the ROC for Taiwan.

Street protests and activists sailing to the disputed archipelago often take place in response to Japan's perceived wrongdoings and mistreatment to Chinese fishing boats in the disputed area, and on important anniversaries, such as 18 September (Mukden Incident in 1931), 7 July (Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937) and 13 December (Nanking Massacre in 1937). This direct-action approach to the dispute has sometimes not been well perceived by the authorities. Fearing for negative impact on the official channel of diplomacy and social stability, requests by the NGOs to sail to the islands have often been blocked by the maritime authorities in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>132</sup> Officially, neither China nor Taiwan has ever made attempted landings on the Diaoyu Islands or any other form of physical declaration, as both prefer to deal the dispute with Japan through diplomatic channel. Thus, even when activists managed to sail close to the islands or made successful landings on Diaoyutai Island, it is questionable that their direct actions would bear any tangible effect on altering

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<sup>131</sup> ACDDI's website provides a detailed chronology of the Diaoyu Islands disputes and the "defending the Diaoyu Islands" movements. See <http://www.diaoyuislands.org/fwl/1.html>. Accessed on 23/03/2011.

<sup>132</sup> See for example, *Sing Tao Daily* (2010) and *Phoenix Television* (2010).

Japan's *de facto* control over the area. Despite the fact their actions lacking any official support, and their actions may do little to change Japan's stance on the issue, what is significant from these "defending the Diaoyu Islands" actions is the nationalist symbolism shown. Japan and Diaoyu Islands epitomise the "pride/humiliation" complex that is the core of China's popular nationalism today. Even though, direct actions are less achievable for general public, the subject has always been hotly discussed in the cyberspace.<sup>133</sup> It is precisely because of this strong and passionate nationalist feelings in China that any friction arisen from the dispute, widespread anti-Japanese movements soon follow on the street and online, hence making the Diaoyu Islands dispute one of most sensitive and nationalistic-oriented issues in today's Sino-Japanese relations.

The following section studies a major and recent event in the island dispute, namely the 2010 boat collision incident. The study investigates the public reactions and government's responses following the event. It analyses the strength of popular nationalism in the public sphere, and the pressure it place on Beijing's diplomatic responses. It also looks into how Beijing intricately manages this form of nationalism between instrumentalising it in its demands to Tokyo and worrying about its domestic implications.

## 5.5 The 2010 Boat Collision

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<sup>133</sup> A search by the title word "Diaoyu Islands on the *Strong Nation Forum*—a popular place for Chinese nationalists, shows 14350 results on 19 May 2011, from March 2008. See <http://bbs.people.com.cn/quickSearch.do?threadtype=1&field=title&op=in&content=%E9%92%93%E9%B1%BC%E5%B2%9B&x=19&y=10&pageNo=1>.

On the morning of 7 September 2010, a Chinese fishing trawler collided with two large patrol boats from the JCG in disputed waters near the Diaoyu Islands. The collision was one of the most serious incidents occurred in the territorial dispute between China and Japan. Not only did it cause a considerable diplomatic row between the two countries, crucially, it also sparked one of the largest nationalist responses against Japan on the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

According to the JCG's narratives, the two patrol boats were conducting routine patrol when they encountered the Chinese trawler, which was apparently operating in the area close to the disputed islands (*Bloomberg News*, 2010). As stated previously, the islands and the surrounding area are under Japan's effective control, thus ships from the JCG maintain regular patrols in the area to chase off any what Tokyo sees as illegal intruders to its territory. On encounter, Japanese ships notified the Chinese trawler for its "illegal" operation within Japanese territorial waters, and ordered the trawler to leave the area. The Chinese boat allegedly ignored this request and then refused to stop to allow Japanese officials to conduct onboard inspections. Eventually, the JCG claimed, the Chinese trawler struck the two patrol ships, and damaged one of them. As a result, the JCG detained the 14 crew members on the Chinese fishing boat, and arrested the captain, Zhan Qixiong. All of them were then taken ashore for questioning.<sup>134</sup> Japan later released the crew members, and the boat, but kept the captain in detention. Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary claimed, "the vessel was illegal fishing in Japanese territorial waters around the islands. We will address the issue rigorously according to our laws," adding that the Chinese boat struck with the Japanese patrol ships despite repeated warnings by the JGC (*Bloomberg News*, 2010).

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<sup>134</sup> The incident received worldwide media coverage; see for example McCurry (2010); AFP (2010b); and BBC News Online (2010a).

Despite China's demands, Japan had twice extended captain Zhan detention period, and he was finally freed on 24 September (MFA, 2010d).

#### **5.5.1 Initial Official Responses**

Recognising the sensitivity on the subject, the Chinese government responded quickly to this incident, with the spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) strongly condemned Japan's action on the same day. She argues,

China emphasises that the Diaoyu Islands and the surrounding area have been its territory since ancient times, so Japan shall not conduct any so-called 'law enforcement' activity in the waters off the islands. More importantly, Japan shall not take any action may threaten the safety of Chinese fishing boat and its crew. China will closely monitor its development and reserve the rights to take further action (MFA, 2010a).

Moreover, China requested the immediate release of the crew and had twice summoned the Japan's ambassador in 24 hours, to express its dissatisfaction with and lodge strong protests against perceived illegal actions by the Japanese. Besides words, China had also confirmed to have postponed a round of negotiations with Japan on the ECS issues as well as a senior official's visit to Japan citing "inappropriate atmosphere" (MFA, 2010b; and *BBC News Online*, 2010c). Moreover, when Japan decided to detain captain Zhan for a further 10 days, China replied with its sturdiest words yet, accusing Japan's refusal to release Zhan in violation of "international law and basic international common sense". It went on to declare Japan's application of its judicial procedure on Zhan as "absurd, illegal, and invalid (荒唐, 非法和无效的)" (MFA, 2010b and 2010c).

From the beginning, the collision incident had grasped full attention of the Chinese media, as crises in Sino-Japanese relations combining with sovereignty disputes making the headline-grabbing story that was too good to miss. The story became sensational front-page headlines for several days in popular newspapers, such as *Global Times*. More effectively, several most used information web portals in China, such as *Sohu*, *Baidu*, *ifeng*, and *Huanqiu*, all set up special reports to closely follow the event, with live updates, specialists comments, and have-your-say sections. The reports not only reflected the government's position on the incident, but most of the headlines also blamed Japanese ships for ramming into Chinese fishing boat.<sup>135</sup> The perspectives Chinese media adopted in covering this event had helped to create a general consensus among the Chinese public that Japan was twice on the guilty side, first for causing the collision, and then for illegally detaining the Chinese captain for 10 days, ignoring Beijing's repeated calls for his release.

### **5.5.2 Nationalist Fury**

With this narrative dominating Chinese media, it is not difficult to understand anti-Japanese nationalists comments soon filled chat rooms and BBS forums across the country. Arguably, what is interesting about these nationalist remarks is that, they create two forms of considerable domestic pressure on the Chinese government. Whilst following the development of the incident, this section will take turns to present these two forms of nationalist pressure and analyse Beijing's responses.

#### *"Weak-Knee" Syndrome*

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<sup>135</sup> For example, 'Japan patrol boat ramming our fishing boat', and 'Japan arrests our captain whose boat was hit,' see *Global Times* (2010).

The first kind of domestic pressure from the nationalists is what I call “weak-knee” criticism. This arises when the government is criticised by nationalists for being too soft in its responses to a perceived foreign aggressor, in this case, Japan. In the boat collision case, this type of criticism showed up across the online community almost as soon as the news broke out. As well as venting their fury at the Japanese, many messages however directed the same level of anger and disappointment at their own government for lacking any meaningful action. In other words, the usual anti-Japanese rhetoric went hand in hand with criticisms for CCP’s weak management of the crisis. For instance, a popular thread posted on the *Strong Nation Forum*, a BBS forum affiliated to the *People’s Daily*, best illustrates this double-edged nationalist rage. The thread, posted on 8 September 2010, a day after the collision, was intended to provide an account of the incident (*Strong Nation Forum*, 2010a). It immediately drew great attention from fellow netizens with a total of 38169 readers and 421 replies. Whilst many replied with strong derogatory remarks, and calling for boycott against Japan, as event further developed with Japan’s refusal to release the captain, many comments turned to the Chinese government for its “weak-kneed” responses:

“Where is our navy? [Diplomatic] protest—what’s it doing to do? If our war ships not dare to enter the Diaoyu Islands, that means we have admitted its sovereignty lays with the Japanese, as even if was international waters, Chinese war ships can enter, let alone territories that belong to us”; “Japan forever dares to take action, China forever stops at words, but the doer always bullies the talker”; “our leaders desperately need some calcium supplements”; “If Japan can arrest our captain off the Diaoyu Islands, why can’t our patrol boats punish the Japanese intruders [in the same way]?”; “The Chinese once thought we were no longer the ‘sick man of East Asia’, we’ve just realised that we still are” (*Strong Nation Forum*, 2010).

Criticisms on Beijing's weak dealings in international affairs are nothing new for the Chinese public, nor are they restricted to the issues with Japan. In 1999, for example, when China's entry application for the membership of World Trade Organisation (WTO) failed to gain support from the US, despite Premier Zhu Rongji's personal promise to offer substantial concessions to the Americans, Premier Zhu was abused mercilessly by his own people, labelling him a "traitor who sells one's own nation" (卖国贼).<sup>136</sup> Moreover, China's official approach to the Diaoyu Islands dispute had thus far been sticking to the aforementioned Deng Xiaoping's suggestions. Whilst claiming unquestionable sovereignty for the archipelago, Beijing had actually preferred putting the issue aside for the future generations of leaders to reach a resolution. This official position was troublesome for Chinese nationalists. From their perspective, while Beijing's shelving the issue and waiting for a wise resolution, Tokyo, in contrast, had been effectively controlling and administering the area since 1970s. It is arguable therefore, in the view of Chinese nationalists, Japan will never want to acknowledge the existence of the dispute, let alone to negotiate with China, so long as it maintains *de facto* control of the islands. China on the other hand, will never be able to bring Japan to the negotiation table, unless physically challenging Japan's *de facto* control. As a result, for Chinese nationalists, the Diaoyu Islands sovereignty cannot be guaranteed unless Beijing toughens up its current stance by actions.

Although it was certainly not the first time that Beijing was criticised by its own people for being too soft in foreign affairs, this type of comments were normally much weaker than the offensive ones aimed at Japan. This time however amid one of the most serious China-Japan confrontations in the area of Diaoyu Islands, incensed

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<sup>136</sup> For more analysis on Zhu's failed negotiation on WTO entry, see Fewsmith (2008: 212-221).

comments directed at the Chinese leadership soon echoed through the cyberspace, and increasingly becoming the dominant tone among the online nationalists. For the nationalists, it was as if Japan's perceived bullish behaviour in the event (refusal to release and threaten to trial captain Zhan) was partly encouraged by China's lack of actions. Put simply, Chinese nationalists believe Beijing's all-talking-no-action approach over the years has made Tokyo undisturbed in its actions around the disputed area. This undoubtedly created enormous pressure on Beijing to speedily defuse this in-ward public anger. A series of drastic actions were taken following the nationalist outbursts on the internet. First, Beijing made several despatches of its own fishery administration ships and maritime patrol boats to the disputed waters in order to protect Chinese fishing boats and crew operating in the area (MFA, 2010b). Second, as the diplomatic stalemate continued, Beijing appeared to have allowed small-scale anti-Japanese street protests to take place around "Mukden Incident" anniversary on 18 September (*BBC News Online*, 2010b), perhaps to release some of nationalist steam on this highly emotionally charged date. Third, although denied by Beijing, at the height of the diplomatic row, China allegedly stopped exports of rare earths to Japan, which are crucial for manufacture of many high-technology products (*The Economist*, 2010d).

Initially, the online community responded positively to Beijing's decision of sending patrol ships to the disputed waters (*Strong Nation Forum*, 2010b). Moreover, the news of Chinese law enforcement boats patrolling off the Diaoyu Islands featured prominently in both traditional media, and online. For example, a journalist of the popular *Global Times* reported from one of the ships on patrol in a series of 13 diaries, detailing numerous encounters with the Japanese counterparts and the bravery and



determination shown in these confrontations by the crew members.<sup>137</sup> This so-called “patrol diaries at Diaoyu Islands” was first serialised on *Global Times* online special report section. It quickly became an Internet news sensation, as it was widely cross-posted and linked in many BBS forums and blogs. After reading Cheng’s emotional and sensational reports, many netizens praised the courageous actions and determining fighting spirit shown by Chinese crew in face with outnumbered and superiorly equipped opponents. Hence credits were duly given to the CCP leadership for taking such hardened approach.

As the diplomatic stalemate continued with captain Zhan still in detention, anti-Japanese street protests were organised online. The protests took place on the weekend of the “Mukden Incident” anniversary in several big cities across China, Hong Kong, and New York.<sup>138</sup> From lessons of previous event, including the 1999 anti-NATO, and 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations, the CCP leadership was fully aware of the implications and potential risks attached to mass public protests. Authorities have sought to forestall protests, blocking the websites of Chinese nationalist groups, telling university students not to protest and erasing discussion of organising demonstrations from the Internet. For instance, it was reported that some nationalist websites and BBS forums were apparently inaccessible by 15 September, with comments and articles deemed too inflammatory deleted (RFI<sup>139</sup> Chinese, 2010).

However, as stated above, Beijing did allow some small-scale anti-Japanese protests in several big cities. While unless the leadership confesses, one can never be certain

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<sup>137</sup> See Cheng (2010).

<sup>138</sup> For reports, see *Voice of America (VOA) Chinese* (2010a; 2010b); and *the Economist* (2010e).

<sup>139</sup> Radio France Internationale.

what the real rationale was behind this rare decision, some interpretations may nonetheless be drawn from the outcomes.

First, the CCP understands that the victim narratives and anti-Japanese sentiment are deeply rooted in current Chinese nationalism, as its patriotic education campaign in the 1990s was focused on this pride/victim discourse. As examined in Chapter Two, not only did CCP's war-based patriotic education campaign in the 1990s strengthen this nationalist root, but also its own political legitimacy was constructed from the victory over Japan in the WWII. Perhaps more so than anyone else, the Communist government recognises the long lasting memories of Japan's brutal occupation of China still strokes Chinese public ire about Japan. Under normal circumstance, Chinese public opinion on Japan is already showing significantly more negative than it on other countries and regions (Li and Zhou, 2009). For a serious incident like the collision, nationalistic emotion amongst Chinese public was bound to be very high. Consequently, the leadership might have little choice but to find ways to safely let the public to vent out some nationalist steam. The collision occurred only days before an important commemoration for the "Mukden Incident" of 1931, marking the start of Japanese occupation in China. The Zhuhai Japanese orgy case mentioned above has already shown the emotional importance these sensitive anniversaries for the Chinese public and in Chinese national identity. Although Chinese boat patrolling off the Diaoyu Islands was a welcome move by the online nationalist, the issue remained unresolved with captain Zhan still in detention as the anniversary approached. The continuous stand off between China and Japan coinciding with the "Mukden Incident" commemoration day making it a potentially explosive nationalistic emotion if harshly

suppressed. As a result, when wide spread calls for anti-Japanese public protests appeared online, it became a passionate request that Beijing could not simply ignore.

Secondly, there is evidence shown that Beijing had made extensive preparation to ensure this round of anti-Japanese protests was under its management. When news of the boat collision broke out, it was not difficult for Beijing to identify a potential high risk period that was just around the corner—the weekend of 18 September, with most people off work. In order to properly manage strong nationalist rage from the public, the government apparently first sent warnings days before the anniversary to activists of the Diaoyu-related issues—potential protest organisers—not to further provoke the matter. For example, it was reported that editors of the website for the CFDDI, the main NGO in mainland China well-known for its advocacy of China’s claim of the islands, were warned by the police “not to break the law by holding demonstrations and other radical actions” (Lam, 2010). Moreover, the anti-Japanese protests took place under tight security. Not only did authorities ensure large police presence outnumbering the protesters, they also cordoned off the route and separated protesters from groups of the public, so that protester number would not increase (Buckley and Master, 2010). Additionally, amid worries that the protests might get out of hand in a recurrence of what happened in 2005, authorities appeared to have made sure that protests did not drag on for too long. In many cities, small groups of protesters were dispersed by the police after an hour or so (Lam, 2010; and Buckley and Master, 2010).

Finally, it can also be argued, as long as Beijing were able to manage this round of protests, and minimise the negative impact, it might be used diplomatically to place

more pressure on Japan to release the captain. Carefully contained nationalist protests might be instrumentalised in the negotiation for captain Zhan's release. This is because, Beijing could use this to argue that despite efforts had been made protests as small as possible, considerable public outrage about the detention still existed. Consequently, Beijing could say diplomatic manoeuvrability was rather limited, its hands were tied, that only the release of Zhan Qixiong could ease tensions between the two countries, hence essentially resolve the incident. What has to be emphasised is that the fundamental precondition for CCP leaders to use nationalism to rally support in diplomatic negotiations is that they must be sure that "nationalist sentiments do not jeopardise the overarching objectives of political stability and economic modernisation" (Zhao, 2009: 240). As well as avoiding social instabilities, it is certainly not in CCP leaders' interest to let Chinese foreign policy be dictated by the emotional, nationalistic xenophobic sentiment on the street. Beijing's ultra-cautious approach to the protests on 18 September illustrated how the leaders attempted to balance nationalism in-between maintaining domestic stability by letting out necessary anger, but not getting out of hand, and foreign policy by securing the release of captain Zhan.

### *"Inward Outcry" Syndrome*

The "inward outcry" syndrome, this work argues, occurs when dissatisfaction on domestic issues is included in the criticism directed at CCP's foreign policy. In other words, disappointment in government's foreign policy is used as an opportunity to vent out disapproval in its domestic politics. Here, criticism of government on foreign policy transfers inwardly into criticism of government's handlings in domestic issues. Typically in China, this means contrasting leaders' perceived soft posture in

international affair with CCP's rather hard, if not bullish posture in domestic affairs. Events following the release of captain Zhan Qixiong exemplified the development of this condition.

When captain Zhan was eventually released on 24 September, his arrival from Japan by a government chartered flight received extensive media coverage in China. Zhan Qixiong was given a high profile hero's welcome, with the deputy governor of Fujian Province (Zhan's hometown) and the assistant to Foreign Minister meeting him at the airport. At home, he was regarded a hero for resisting against Japan (抗日英雄) by Chinese media and the public, a title more commonly associated with men and women who gave lives fighting against the Japanese during the War of Resistance (1937-1945). Moreover, his words in an interview soon after the arrival had become widely quoted in Chinese cyberspace, with nationalists making up an extremely popular online catchphrase showing their appreciation for Zhan's bravery, and support for China's position on the Diaoyu Islands issues. When asked by media about his view of the whole incident, Zhan replied:

“Diaoyu Islands is Chinese territory, of course I can go fishing there...they [the Japanese] repeatedly ask me to admit making mistake, but I would say Diaoyu Islands is China's till I die...I just want to get back fishing at Diaoyu Islands, and I will go back there...I won't fear [the Japanese], as Diaoyu Islands is Chinese land” (CNR<sup>140</sup>, 2010).

Chinese netizens picked up his words “go back fishing at Diaoyu Islands” (回钓鱼岛打渔) together with “Diaoyu Islands”, which literately means “the fishing island” in

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<sup>140</sup> China Network Radio (中国广播网).

Chinese, to create a catchphrase “go fishing at Diaoyu Islands” (去钓鱼岛钓鱼). The catchphrase was not only used to express the eagerness of the user wanting to “defend the Diaoyu Islands”, but more worrying for the leaders perhaps, it was soon connected with an ongoing social problem and increasingly used in sarcastic criticisms.

Months before the boat collision incident, Chinese netizens exposed several cases of local law enforcement agents using entrapment to catch victims and boosting their incomes from fines. These cases first drew great attention from the online community, then as public interest grew, they were followed closely by traditional media in China. The profile of these cases moved quickly from Internet forums to newspapers and then to television debates. Wide spread criticism were voiced against this so-called “fishing/hooking then enforcing law” (钓鱼执法), hence the phrase had soon become one of the hottest tags online.<sup>141</sup> At the height of the diplomatic tension following the boat collisions, a popular Chinese newspaper published a highly outspoken editorial-style article, which played with the two phrases, Diaoyu Islands and entrapment, presented a sarcastic criticism at the CCP leadership. The article appeared on *Southern Weekend* (南方周末), a weekly newspaper renowned for its straight-talking, liberal (by Chinese standard) reporting style, which is popular amongst urban intellectuals in China. It was titled controversially, “Can ‘fish and then enforce law’ domestically, but can’t enforce law at Diaoyu Islands”. From the title it is perhaps not difficult to grasp the gist of the article, not only did the article criticise the leaders for failure to maintain law enforcement at Diaoyu Islands, it also questioned the government’s choice to block the word “Diaoyu Islands” from online search results and weibo (微博 or Microblog) entries, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter (Lin, 2010).

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<sup>141</sup> For an English report on “hooking then enforcing law” cases in China, see Richburg (2009).

Again, the article was an instant hit with Chinese web users, the same group of netizens who had been exchanging nationalistic and anti-Japanese comments online. The article was quickly copied and cross-posted across China's cyberspace before it was suddenly removed from the *Southern Weekend's* website.

During the China-Japan diplomatic row, not only did this "inward outcry" syndrome occur in cyberspace, it also happened in real world. After captain Zhan's release, focus of the issue appeared to have turned from a diplomatic contest to a nationalist battle between China and Japan. Prior to Zhan's release, Tokyo explained the reasons for making this decision, citing fear of possible worsening of Sino-Japanese relations, and therefore, continually detaining Zhan would not be appropriate (*BBC News Online*, 2010d). Consequently, many Japanese felt their government's handling of the incident was also "weak-kneed" (*The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2009). Japanese nationalists blamed Tokyo for voluntarily releasing the captain, as they saw Japan "twisted" first in the bilateral standoff. In days after the release, as well as anti-Chinese demonstrations taking place across Japan, China's diplomatic establishments in Japan were also attacked, either directly or by threatening letters (Tong, 2010; and Wang, H., 2010). In response, a second round of anti-Japanese demonstrations took place in mid October. This time the scale was much larger and more widespread than the previous round discussed above. As well as the usual suspects such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing, protests were held in some medium-sized cities further inland. It was in these less prosperous places, nationalist protests turn inward, with banners about "soaring house price", "promoting multiparty rule", and "anti-corruption" featured alongside with the usual anti-Japanese slogans (*BBC Chinese*, 2010). Moreover, the online community responded to the inward criticisms shown in

the protests by mocking the government's domestic performance with the Diaoyu Islands issue. For example, a particular cartoon started to appear across China's cyber communities following the latest round of anti-Japanese demonstrations. It featured a conversation between two men about the ongoing protests;

“Why's it so noisy out there, could it possibly be another demolition?”

“No, it's a group of angry youth [愤青] who are protesting in front of the Japanese embassy. They want Japan to hurry and give back the Diaoyu Islands.”

“Hey, I hear that of all countries China has the most land disputes with its neighbours. Is that true?”

“I don't know, but of all countries China is definitely involved in the most land disputes with its own citizens!” (*China Digital Times*, 2010)

This cartoon links Diaoyu Islands dispute with a serious social conflict in today's China, namely forced demolitions. Driven by rapid economic growth, local governments in China increasingly sell land to prospective developers for redeployment in return for generous financial rewards. Occupiers are often evicted by force, with owners receiving inadequate compensation for their demolished properties. While this practice is nothing new, in recent years, online revelations of several high profile cases, where owners fought against the enforcers right to the death (either by violence or suicide), had truly brought the issue to great public attention.<sup>142</sup> The cases created enormous shock and outcry in general public. Confrontations between the eviction enforcement officers and defying property owners have thus become a major source of social unrest in China.

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<sup>142</sup> See for example Wang, J. (2010).



The CCP leaders treated these “inward outcries” very seriously, and responded quickly and decisively. Access to news about anti-Japanese protests touching domestic issues were promptly blocked, and with online news listings later removed altogether. To the dismay of the nationalist netizens, sensitive words, such as “Diaoyu Islands” and “anti-Japanese protests” were temporarily disabled on Chinese search engines. Additionally, in order to contain the ongoing anti-Japanese protests and prevent students joining in, strict gate control was put in place in some university campuses where the largest scale protests had been held (VOA, 2010c).

## **5.6 Evaluation**

As deliberated in Chapter Two, Chinese nationalism in the post-Cold War era is not a singular tangible concept that has a solid definition. Rather, this work takes the view that Chinese nationalism today is a complex system of beliefs and perceptions that is constantly shaped by experiences in both domestic politics and foreign affairs. By the same constructivist token, I have argued, Chinese nationalism is mutually constrictive to Beijing’s domestic and foreign policy. Without access to the relevant policy makers on the issue, it is of course impossible for one to precisely judge the detrimental effects nationalism had on Beijing’s subsequent actions following the incident. However, this is not the analytical purpose of this work. Rather, this work has intended in using the boat collision case to illustrate the mutually constitutive dynamics between Chinese nationalism, domestic politics and foreign policy and how Beijing handled this double-edge, dual-directional nationalist effect. This section critically assesses the two effects, namely external and internal, popular nationalism showed during the boat collision incident and Beijing’s management on the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

### 5.6.1 External Effects

The Diaoyu Islands dispute is one of few real-world issues<sup>143</sup> between China and Japan that attach a great deal of nationalistic sentiment amongst Chinese public. As previously stated, from the very beginning, the Chinese Communist Party had constructed its political legitimacy on the basis of defeating the Japanese invaders, reclaiming lost territory, and establishing independence for the Chinese people. As presented in Chapter Two, this legitimacy foundation has heavily been elaborated in order to promote a Party-centric national identity. Sovereignty and territorial integrity are a matter of political correctness, which yield uncompromisable stance from the CCP. They are the red lines of China's foreign policy (Interview A, 2009; Interview B, 2009; and *China News Network*, 2010). The Diaoyu Islands dispute falls into this category. Because this form of national identity centred at the CCP's triumph over foreign aggressors, with Japan being the most recent and most brutal one, Japan is considered as the "touchstone" for contemporary Chinese nationalism (Interview C, 2009). Taking an interpretive approach, one can argue that due to the reasons listed above, CCP leaders and the Chinese people have had a common share-knowledge on the ownership of the islands group, that is the islands undoubtedly belong to China. Moreover, following the collision incident, the two groups also shared their perceptions on the Japanese actions. As nationalist outrage rose from these two collective subjective meanings—the islands are China's and yet Japan illegally detained our captain, the leaders could fully understand the heated emotions expressed online. Consequently, it would not be the interest of Chinese leaders to

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<sup>143</sup> I see most problematic issues between China and Japan are emotion-related, such as Yasukuni Shrine, Japan's war apology, and history textbooks. Other real-world issues include the ECS oil and gas field dispute, which, for the focus of this study, I treat it being a separate issue from the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

suppress public anger towards Japan, as doing so would be viewed as if the government had shifted from the shared consensus on the Diaoyu Islands issue, hence CCP's own political legitimacy would be questioned. It must be said, in spite of its firm stance the Diaoyu Islands issue, prior to the 2010 boat collisions incident, China had rarely sent patrol boat to the disputed area in order to confront the Japanese. Most interceptions made by the JCG vessels were civil boats such as trawlers. This time, nevertheless, amid strong "soft-knee" criticisms, and significance of the diplomatic quarrel, Beijing had to prove to the nationalist critics that it would not succumb under the perceived Japanese provocation. Despatching patrol ships to the disputed waters could be interpreted as a rather effective way to satisfy the nationalist critics, as direct actions were called for. With nationalists' approval, not only did Beijing strengthen its patrol force in the area by China's brand new most advanced patrol ship after the diplomatic row, it also declared that its maritime surveillance vessels would establish routine patrol and maintain a regular presence off the Diaoyu Islands (Li, 2010; and *Southern Daily*, 2010).

Here, nationalist fury originated from an issue in foreign affairs (external), namely confrontation with Japan over Diaoyu Islands. Regardless, whether the nationalist criticisms were directed at Tokyo or Beijing, they nonetheless did not deviate away from the issue. On this level, the dynamic between nationalism and foreign policy flows in the following way.

First, the boat collisions (external issue) infringed Beijing's core foreign policy principle, namely sovereignty and territorial integrity, created a diplomatic crisis. Second, the revenue-driven media seized this opportunity with front-page headlines

and sensational reports. Ordinary citizens, who shared the same stance with the government, filled the online space with nationalistic sentiments and criticisms for Beijing's usual "weak-knee" response. At this point, foreign policy makers were placed under great pressure. Adherent to the standpoint of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), foreign policy directions are rooted in beliefs and perceptions of the decision makers, which in turn are shaped by subjective meanings from domestic sources, such as culture, education, history and national identity. Domestic sources thus provide both inputs and constraints to foreign policy. Therefore, feedbacks from public opinions on a particular issue in foreign affairs is vitally important for decision makers in making policy choices. On this occasion, neither its fundamental principles nor strong public reactions offered much leeway for Beijing in responding to the crisis. With captain Zhan's detention at stake, Beijing simply had to back up its solemn words with some adequate actions. In order to press for Zhan's freedom, apart from despatching patrol ships, a series of unprecedented hard-line measures were also adopted against Japan, including suspend ministerial-level contacts, cancellations of planned meetings and official visits, discouraging Chinese tourists to Japan, the alleged halt of rare earth exports to Japan, and detentions of four Japanese nationals in Northern China.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, as discussed above, these efforts did lower the voice of "weak knee" criticisms on the Internet and earned Beijing some much-needed credit from popular nationalists online. Particularly, the "half-hearted" release of Zhan Qixiong by Japan was regarded by Chinese public as a victory for China, as Japan seemingly backed down to save the worsening bilateral relations (Takahashi, 2010).

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<sup>144</sup> China nevertheless denied the arrests were in any way linked with the collision incident, but accusing the Japanese violating Chinese law relating to military establishments. See *Reuters* (2010).

On balance, Beijing treated the “weak-knee” criticism very sensitively. Beijing’s management of this type of nationalist criticism can be best explained by a pressure cooker analogy. Japan’s prolonged detention of captain Zhan can be seen as the fire under the nationalist pressure cooker that was heating up rapidly. Beijing had two ways to ease the building-up pressure. First, it had to put up the pressure valve by cautiously allowing several small-scale street protests, in order to vent out some nationalistic steam. Second and ultimately, the heat source has to be turned down to effectively solve the problem. To achieve this, Beijing employed a set of hard line action to Tokyo; and in turn, transferred some of the pressure to Tokyo on Zhan’s detention. Under the pressure, Tokyo eventually turned off the heat by reluctantly releasing captain Zhan, hence the nationalist pressure cooker in China cooled down. In short, the boat collisions incident demonstrated that when popular nationalism is directed at Japan or at its own handlings of principal issues in foreign affairs, such as Diaoyu Islands, Chinese leaders had to respond in a way, that would, if possible, both diplomatically resolve the issue to China’s favour, and emotionally relieve the nationalist anger.

### **5.6.2 Internal Effects**

In contrast to the external dynamic above, the internal dynamic effects of nationalism are more volatile and less predicable. This is because nationalist sentiments originated from an external source (e.g. boat collisions incident) transferred inwardly into criticisms about internal issues (e.g. entrapment; corruption). This is certainly a more serious matter for the CCP leadership. Whilst for foreign policy, Beijing is able to use various tools at its discretion to bring the shared believes and perceptions inline with that of its own, it cannot guarantee same achievement in domestic affairs. Despite the

“reform and opening-up” policy, and in spite of rapid economic growth, it is still relatively difficult for majority of Chinese people to travel abroad. As a result, perceptions towards foreign countries are largely constructed by subjective history (e.g. old friends or foes), and by information filtered through CCP’s powerful censorship system. It is therefore comparatively easier for the leaders to synchronise media reports on major foreign policy issues, such as Japan, Taiwan, and the United States. In contrast, the CCP has much less control over public opinions on domestic issues. These issues relate directly to one’s day-to-day life, thus can be witnessed from one’s own eyes. Especially in the age of Internet communications, any web user, as noted in the Chapter Three, can use the Internet to break news to a wide public. Thanks to the social network, news can be spread out and reproduced in a very short time, which the traditional forms of media simply cannot match. Hence, even with sophisticate online censoring technology, it is nearly impossible for the CCP to maintain absolute top-down control over domestic information.

The most critical aspect in this effect is that, whilst the public and government by and large have “shared knowledge” on international issues, Due to conflicting interests, the public may not share common ground with local authorities on many domestic issues. Difference in subjective knowledge leads to different perceptions and contrasting opinions. The core assumption of this work has been that nationalism, domestic policy and foreign policy are all mutually constitutive. Adherent to this, I may present a three-stage process of this internal dynamic of nationalism. First, the boat collisions incident brought out nationalist rage from the public. Beijing’s initial responses towards this crisis were not convincing for popular nationalists. The generally negative opinions towards Japan combining with firm stance on the

sovereignty debate, constituted nationalist attacks on the authority. Second, disappointments and disapprovals of Beijing's early weak reactions in the diplomatic row together with other ongoing social issues where the public were in frustration with the actions of the authority, constituted netizens' critical commentary on domestic issues as well as on foreign policy. Finally, this two-level criticism placed the authority under massive stress, as it had to consider the separate responses for foreign policy and domestic issues. Evidently, the CCP leaders showed more intolerance towards this internal effect of nationalism than it did towards the external effects. As critical as the Diaoyu Islands comments may be, the leaders and the public in principal hold the same position on the dispute issue. The same assertion however, cannot be made with criticisms on social problems, where a clash of interests between the authority and the public resulting in opposing stances and positions. As a result, the authority promptly adopted whatever means available to block and wipe out these type of messages either online or on street.

It is clear that the two set of nationalism dynamics originated on same point of departure, namely anti-Japanese sentiment. What splits them is the transfer from criticism on an international issue to criticism on domestic issues. But, what catalysed this transfer? And, under what circumstance would the transfer take place? Although, the exact details of criticism maybe different from one issue to another, one can certainly draw some observations from the boat collision case.

First, the internet is an open communication platform that has very "low barrier of entry and risk of use" for anyone with a connection to access and provide information (Xiao, 2011: 209). Expressing dissatisfactions with the authority online is surely less

risky than do it on the street. Moreover, anti-Japanese comments and opinions are normally left unchallenged in China, as one Chinese scholar revealed, “many issues concerning Japan are matters of political correctness, anti-Japanese feelings among the public are both genuine and valid, thus, for most times, anti-Japanese sentiment is unrestricted” (Interview B, 2009). Consequently, as one saw during the 2010 boat collision incident, the Chinese public might mix anti-Japanese clichés with critical commentary on certain domestic issues to even further minimise the risk.

Second, it is arguable that the directional shift in criticisms is more likely to happen when a single issue remains unresolved for relatively long period of time with not much development in the middle. If one compares protests following the boat collisions with the 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations studied in the previous chapter, the 2010 protest is on a much smaller scale of that in 2005. During the 2005 protests, nonetheless, there were no banners or slogans about social problems. The 2005 demonstrations were triggered by several issues in Sino-Japanese relations, such as textbook controversy, Yasukuni Shrine, and Japan’s membership in United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It can be asserted that the popular nationalist pressure, accumulated over the previous years, was so high that the government allowed the public to fully vent their anger, thus the popular nationalists did not need to turn inwards. Additionally, the 2005 anti-Japanese public demonstration maintained intensity for more than three weeks, with nation-wide protests taking place at nearly every weekend and other public holidays. It did not give the Chinese public an opportunity to shift their focus elsewhere. In comparison, the 2010 anti-Japanese movements were rather more sporadic, with only two recognisable rounds of street



protests across China taking place in a month. It is therefore possible for the anti-Japanese focus to drift away in between events.

Finally, it is worth noting that only in the past five years or so, “mocking culture” or “kuso” (恶搞文化) has become a new Internet phenomenon in China. New words, phrases, expressions created by netizens have become an “internet language” that is used exclusively in China’s online community. The language is often used as parodies to mock, comment on a person, an event or a phenomenon in a sarcastic manner.<sup>145</sup> Active web users compete one another to invent the most popular phrases and the best ridicules in order to gain popularity and fame in the online community. It is therefore conceivable to argue that the motivations for making up the two mocking cases on entrapment and forced eviction were not entirely to highlight social problems, but rather, to raise the creator’s online profile.

## 5.7 Summary

The main objective of this chapter has been using the Diaoyu Islands dispute case to display the dynamic impacts of nationalism in Beijing’s foreign and domestic policy considerations. The chapter has begun by highlighting the important values of Diaoyu Islands dispute for China and its people, from both foreign policy perspective and emotional perspective. It has presented why this nationalistically charged issue lies at centre of Chinese foreign policy principles. The chapter then moved on to explore one of the most serious diplomatic standoff between China and Japan on the dispute. By looking closely at China’s official actions and popular nationalist responses, the study

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<sup>145</sup> For more information on the rise of “Internet mocking”, please see an article in *China Comment* 《半月谈》, a political commentary magazine affiliated to CCP’s Central Propaganda Department, Yuan (2010).

demonstrated that multidimensional characteristics of popular nationalism. For analytical clarity, I have peeled off the multiple layers nationalist impacts by grouping them into two interlinked syndromes or group of effects, namely “weak knee” syndrome and “inward outcry” syndrome. For each syndrome, detailed analyses were then carried out on how nationalism in-turn influenced Beijing’s foreign policy actions and domestic politics during the different phases of the boat collision incident. It is worth noting that by separating the direction of which popular nationalism is aimed at does not indicate that nationalist comment directing issues in foreign affairs may only affect foreign policy, and *vice versa*. The “mutually constitutive” assumption from mainstream Constructivism has been critically adopted to explain the core reason, namely difference in shared knowledge, for anti-Japanese nationalist sentiments to “split” two ways. Finally, an interpretive analysis is adopted to speculate the catalyses for the split and the conditions under which the split is more likely to occur.

## Chapter Six: Conclusions

This thesis has embarked on a journey to critically assess popular nationalism's role and prominence in shaping China's Japan policy in the post-Cold War era. It has set out with two important research questions that required investigation to ascertain popular nationalism's influence in China's Japan policy *vis-à-vis* domestic policy. From the very beginning, the research journey has carried with a Constructivist baggage in taking a theoretical position that the three core elements in this study, namely, popular nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics, are all mutually constitutive. The research has treated "popular nationalism" as a system of nationalistic beliefs, which originated at the grassroots level and is subsequently reproduced, reformed, and spread at the same level. In order to open up the "black box" of popular nationalism, and that of foreign policy, and not treat them as "superficially given", the thesis has introduced the notion of popular nationalism dynamics to denote this multi-dimension and mutually constitutive role of popular nationalism. In addition, this research has also adopted the two-way dialectical paradigm from Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) to view the interactive relations between nationalism, foreign policy and domestic politics. In this view, as the thesis has presented, popular nationalism travels both upwardly, as a determinant and downwardly, as an instrument. Upwardly, nationalist public opinion not only places pressure on the state in international setting, it also affects social stability and political legitimacy in domestic setting. Downwardly, the state manages (promote/restrain) popular nationalism to serve its foreign and domestic objectives.

This chapter attempts to firstly, evaluate the empirical findings from the case studies of the 2005 anti-Japanese protest and the Diaoyu Islands dispute, by revisiting them with the research questions, and identifying the commonalities and differences between the two cases, in terms of the potency of popular nationalism, and the state's responses to it. This is followed by an overall assessment on the scope of limitations of this research. From the basis of this thesis, the chapter concludes with a brief outline of the prospects for the future research in the field of Chinese popular nationalism and foreign policy.

## **6.1 Empirical Findings**

The analysis of the 2005 anti-Japanese protest and the Diaoyu Islands dispute reveals a number of empirical commonalities and differences, with regard to the dynamics of popular nationalism in China's Japan policy. This section uses the two central research questions to group the empirical findings into two interlinked categories. As a reminder, the two principal research questions are: 1) how has popular nationalism been instrumental in China's Japan policy *vis-à-vis* domestic politics? 2) How and to what extent Chinese government has managed popular nationalism in respect of foreign and domestic policy practices?

### **6.1.1 The Instrumental Impact of Popular Nationalism**

In both cases, the study has found popular nationalism, demonstrated by rhetoric writings, and public protests, did to some extent affect/reaffirm the Chinese government's policy choices. In the 2005 anti-Japanese protest case, for instance, the

government initially supported the anti-Japanese mass petitions. The enormous number of signatures, by people in China and overseas, was considered by Beijing a convincing evidence of opposing Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Beijing hoped this evidence would present a persuasive case to the UN to prevent Japan's bid to succeed, thus reaffirming China's policy position, namely no permanent membership for Japan. In the Diaoyu Islands dispute case, however, pressure from popular nationalist movement actually restricted Beijing's policy options. In the immediate aftermath of the 2010 boat collisions incident, although Beijing had repeatedly denounced the detention of Zhan Qixiong, captain of the Chinese trawler involved in the collisions, it did not take any hard-line actions at first. The Chinese government merely adopted the usual tactics on a diplomatic row, namely diplomatic protests followed by suspension of bilateral exchanges. Nonetheless, when popular nationalists turn the outward anti-Japanese rhetoric into inward criticism of Beijing's soft approach (soft-knee syndrome), the scope of Beijing's policy choice became limited. As the position on the sovereignty question over the Diaoyu Islands being unequivocal, Beijing had to respond to the popular nationalist criticism. If it did not, popular nationalists would seriously question Beijing's determination on the sovereignty issue of the islands, thus potentially threaten its domestic political legitimacy. As a result, Beijing soon hardened its handlings of the issue, by sending routine patrol boats into the disputed area, and halting the export of Japan much-depended rare earth. Not only did the actions pressurised Tokyo into eventually releasing Zhan without charge, they also received praises from Chinese popular nationalists on the Internet.

### 6.1.2 On Managing Popular Nationalism

As well as affecting Chinese government's foreign policy prescriptions, both cases have illustrated that popular nationalism also has implications to China's domestic politics. Domestically, ever since Tiananmen crackdown, the fundamental objective for the CCP government has been maintaining social stability, with the slogan "stability above all" (稳定高于一切) frequently appearing in state-run media and official speeches.<sup>146</sup> Hence, for Beijing, one of the most worrying aspects in popular nationalism dynamics is the potential of causing public disorder, and social instability. In the 2005 anti-Japanese protest case, initially, Beijing reluctantly allowed anti-Japanese protest to take place to vent out some built-up nationalist steam, fearing failure to do so popular nationalists might challenge its political legitimacy. However, again for domestic reasons, Beijing started to concern about public order when peaceful petition turned into spontaneous mass public street marches in multiple cities that vandalised shops and buildings. In response, as well as employing large numbers of riot police to contain the crowd, Beijing also forbade news reporting on the protest and attempted to persuade university students not to participate.

Conversely, the investigation on the Diaoyu Islands dispute case revealed a new direction in which popular nationalism affecting domestic politics, namely the "inward outcry" syndrome. Under normal circumstance, popular nationalist sentiment is directed at either an out-group subject ("Other"), or the state's handling of the Other (foreign policy). During the nationalist movement following the boat collisions

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<sup>146</sup> Since 2005, this slogan gradually subsided, with the CCP favouring a new one, Hu Jintao's "building a harmonious society" (建立和谐社会). Harmonious society is based on stability, but further it requires smoothing out the unwanted critical voices. See Lam (2006: 251-253); and

incident, it appeared, to some extent nationalistic anger was transferred from rage against Japan, disappointment of Beijing's soft action, to showing discontent towards domestic social issues. From state's perspective, this is the most dangerous strain of nationalist dynamics in respect to social stability, because problems outside in foreign affairs has now compiled with problems inside. Facing this new challenge, Beijing toughened up its strict censorship on the Internet, blocking words relevant to the Diaoyu Islands issue, and deleting any threads and messages showing displeasure on social issues.

Under what condition does this strain of popular nationalism exhibit? Why did it not show in the 2005 anti-Japanese protest, but did in 2010 protest? Several attributions are believed to be able to explicate these questions. First, there was a difference in terms of general status of Sino-Japanese relations between 2005 and 2010. In 2005, at height of the "frozen period" in bilateral relations, anti-Japanese sentiment had been rising for several years. Therefore, when anti-Japanese movement was triggered by Japan's bid for permanent membership, the eruption popular nationalism was much larger and wider than that of 2010, hence a much "richer" anti-Japanese sentiment. Second, in the 2005 case, several issues along side with Japan's bid, were protests against, whereas in 2010, only one issue was opposed, namely the Diaoyu Islands sovereignty. Therefore, it may be able to argue that the negative feeling towards was so strong and the Chinese government had to let the public to fully vent out their popular nationalist steam. Hence the nationalist fury was able to focus solely on the external issues regarding with Japan. Finally, thanks to the development of the Internet communication technology, and the increase of civilian reporting had made more and more social issues exposed to the Chinese public. Weblogs, Bullet Board

System (BBS) forums, social networking sites only exploded in China in the past few years, therefore, although many social issues existed in 2005, information about which might have remained unreported or not as widely spread due to government's media control.

Overall, the evidence from both case studies shows that popular nationalism is a paradoxical ideational determinant in China's Japan policy, one that Beijing needs to treat very sensitively. Whilst popular anti-Japanese sentiment may be instrumentally used to achieve Beijing's foreign policy objectives, its implications to domestic stability cannot be underestimated. Concurrently, this concern about domestic stability and political legitimacy also affect its instrumental role in foreign policy. In short, the two cases have shown Beijing constantly attempts to balance popular nationalism's instrumental role with its implications.

## **6.2 Implications and Prospect for Future Research**

By taking a Constructivist theoretical stance, this thesis has demonstrated the dynamic and mutually constitutive relations between Chinese popular nationalism, China's Japan policy and domestic politics. Due to the limited scope of this research, there are however noticeable caveats to this modestly defined study.

First of all, from theoretical perspective, critics may argue although the thesis opened the "black box" of popular nationalism and foreign policy, the influence of ideation factor, like nationalism, over-elaborated. Moreover, the "mutually constrictive" assumption was taken as "given", without theoretically bridging the gap between the



thinking mind of the decision makers and that of the popular nationalists. In other words, without knowing the *real* intentions/motives to a specific policy outcome, it is difficult to affirmatively asserting nationalism influences. Indeed, this critique is valid, as it is difficult to validate the claim. This is because, to validate it, one needs to know the inner workings of foreign policy decision making, and the thinking of the decision maker(s). This is simply unattainable in the case of China, for such sensitive subject, popular nationalism, and such concurrent issue, Sino-Japanese relations. Even if this was possible in other cases, a completely new theoretical framework needs to be constructed incorporating theories on decision making dynamics and leader's personality and psychology. This is well beyond the technical constraints of this research.

Second, critics may argue that the interpretive methods used in this research may not accurately measure the nationalist influence both externally and internally. A more sophisticated quantitative-combined content analysis, applying word coding to relevant texts and documents may able to product more tangible evaluation on popular nationalism's impacts and implications to foreign and domestic policy decisions. However, in China's case, not many official papers can be found regarding contemporary issues in nationalism and Sino-Japanese relations, as most of them would be inaccessible to the public. This research has drawn a vast amount of materials in both English and Chinese. Therefore, to do a content analysis all Chinese writings would have to be expertly translated into English before putting through the word coding software. It would not only be time consuming, the "lost in translation" effect might also disturb analytical results. Having said this, it may be interesting for

researcher in the future to conduct a quantitative base exercise on this subject and then compare the findings with this study.

Finally, from a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) perspective, critics may point out, this study has only focused on policy outcome, but neglected the process of which is made. In other words, this study worked backwardly from policy outcome to interpret the motives and intentions. The critics may argue the foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) dynamics is as influential as popular nationalism dynamics in shaping final policy decisions. To respond, it is worth stressing that the primary subject of this thesis is the popular nationalism dynamics, not foreign policy. Consequently, diverting ink to FPDM dynamics would dilute the analytical focus hence loose the research objectives. Nevertheless, there is a promising prospect for future research to include other factors and determinants in foreign policy *vis-à-vis* popular nationalism.

For the foreseeable future, barring dramatic changes of political landscape in China and Japan, the anti-Japanese sentiment in Chinese popular nationalism will stay. The unsolved issues in Sino-Japanese relations will still occasionally cause bilateral diplomatic friction and eruption of nationalism in both China and Japan. This means, the Chinese government, has to constantly keep a close eye on the popular nationalism pressure cooker. It has to relentlessly homing its heat management skills in facing new challenges, in order to maintain an optimum temperature of the popular nationalism pressure cooker, to best suit China's ever-evolving external and internal environment.

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# Appendices

## **APPENDIX I: Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China**

29 September 1972

*See:* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA),  
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint72.html>. Accessed 02/12/2010.



## **APPENDIX II: Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between Japan and the People's Republic of China**

12 August 1978

*See:* MOFA, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/treaty78.html>. Accessed 02/12/2010.

### **APPENDIX III: Japan-China Joint Declaration: On Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development**

26 November 1998

*See:* MOFA, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/visit98/joint.html>.  
Accessed 02/12/2010.

**APPENDIX IV: Joint Statement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Comprehensive Promotion of a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests”**

Issued in Tokyo on 7 May 2008

*See:* MOFA, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint0805.html>. Accessed 02/12/2010.

## **APPENDIX V: Chronology of Political Exchanges between PRC and Japan since 1990<sup>1</sup>**

Aug 1991	Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki visits China, first Western leader to do so after Tiananmen Square crackdown.
Apr 1992	Secretary General of CCP Jiang Zemin visits Japan, presents formal invitation for the imperial visit to China.
Oct 1992	Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko state visit to China, first imperial visit by Japanese Emperor.
Mar 1994	Japanese Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro visits China.
May 1995	Japanese Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi visits China, first incumbent Prime Minister of Japan to visit the China War Resistance Against Japan Memorial Museum and the Macro Polo Bridge.
Nov 1995	President Jiang Zemin meets Prime Minister Murayama during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Osaka.
Sep 1997	Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro formal visit to China, first incumbent Prime Minister of Japan to visit Northeast China (Manchuria).
Nov 1997	Premier Li Peng visits Japan, put forward “Five Principles of Sino-Japanese Relations”, namely mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs; seeking commons while setting aside difference; handling disputes properly, increasing dialogue and understanding; mutual benefit, deepening economic cooperation; and being forward-looking and carrying on friendship from generation to generation.
Nov 1998	President Jiang Zemin makes an official state visit to Japan, first of such to Japan by Chinese head of state. Two sides issue ‘Japan-China Joint Declaration’ (see Appendix III), the 3 <sup>rd</sup> important political document in Sino-Japanese relations.
Jul 1999	Reciprocal visit by Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo to China.

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<sup>1</sup> Political exchanges here indicate mutual visits by governmental leader (Japanese Prime Minister; Chinese Premier), head of state (Japanese Emperor, Chinese President), and foreign ministers.

May 2000	Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan visits Japan.
Aug 2000	Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Yohei visits China.
Oct 2000	Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji makes an official visit to Japan.
Oct 2001	Working visit by Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro to China, including a visit to the China War Resistance Against Japan Memorial Museum.
Oct 2001	President Jiang meets Prime Minister Koizumi at the APEC Forum in Shanghai.
Sep 2002	Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko meets President Jiang in Beijing.
Apr 2003	Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko visits China.
Aug 2003	Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visits Japan.
Apr 2004	Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko visits China.
Apr 2005	Japanese Foreign Minister Machimura Nobutaka visits China.
Oct 2006	Official visit to China by Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shizo, first such visit by either side in five years. A significant event for the reconciliation of Sino-Japanese relations after the Koizumi regime, and is coined as “破冰之旅” (Ice-breaking Tour). Both sides agree to establish mutually beneficial strategic partnership.
Feb 2007	Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visits Japan, political preparations for the upcoming visit by Premier Wen Jiabao.
Apr 2007	Premier Wen Jiabao visits Japan, termed as “融冰之旅” (Ice-melting Tour). Two sides confirm the basic frameworks for mutually beneficial strategic partnership.
Dec 2007	Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko visits Beijing to prepare Prime Minister Fukuda’s official visit.
Dec 2007	Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo officially visits China, coined as “迎春之旅” (Spring-herald Tour) by media. Fukuda makes a speech at Peking University and visits Qufu, Shandong Province, the hometown of Confucius.
Apr 2008	Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi goes to Japan, making final political preparation for President Hu Jintao’s upcoming state visit.

- May 2008      President Hu Jintao to Japan completes an official state visit to Japan, which media describes as “暖春之旅” (Warm-spring Tour). Both sides sign a joint statement on ‘Comprehensive Promotion of a Mutually Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests’, the 4<sup>th</sup> political document between China and Japan since the normalisation of bilateral relations (see Appendix IV).
- Aug 2008      Prime Minister Fukuda attends the Opening Ceremony of Beijing Olympic Games, and meets with President Hu and Premier Wen.
- Oct 2008      President Hu and Premier Wen meet with Japanese new Prime Minister Aso Taro, who is attending the Asia-Euro Summit in China.
- Oct 2008      Premier Wen travels to Fukuoka, Japan, to attend Japan-China-Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit.
- Apr 2009      Prime Minister Aso visits China and talks with Premier Wen and President Hu.

*Source: Compiled by author with information collected from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (MFA), [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/yz/1206\\_25/sbgx/](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/gjhdq/gj/yz/1206_25/sbgx/). Accessed 29/11/2010.*

## APPENDIX VI: Maps of Diaoyu Islands and Disputed Area in the East China Sea

### Map I

*See:* BBC Image,

[http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/50005000/gif/\\_50005270\\_chunxiao\\_gas\\_464x386v2.gif](http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/50005000/gif/_50005270_chunxiao_gas_464x386v2.gif). Accessed 11/04/2011.

### Map II

*See:* Drifte, Reinhard (2009) 'Territorial Conflicts in the East China Sea—from Missed Opportunities to Negotiation Stalemate,' **The Asia-Pacific Journal**. 22, 1 June. [http://www.japanfocus.org/data/map\\_of\\_china.jpg](http://www.japanfocus.org/data/map_of_china.jpg). Accessed 11/04/2011.